This is a digital copy of a book that was preserved for generations on library shelves before it was carefully scanned by Google as part of a project to make the world's books discoverable online.

It has survived long enough for the copyright to expire and the book to enter the public domain. A public domain book is one that was never subject to copyright or whose legal copyright term has expired. Whether a book is in the public domain may vary country to country. Public domain books are our gateways to the past, representing a wealth of history, culture and knowledge that's often difficult to discover.

Marks, notations and other marginalia present in the original volume will appear in this file - a reminder of this book's long journey from the publisher to a library and finally to you.

Usage guidelines

Google is proud to partner with libraries to digitize public domain materials and make them widely accessible. Public domain books belong to the public and we are merely their custodians. Nevertheless, this work is expensive, so in order to keep providing this resource, we have taken steps to prevent abuse by commercial parties, including placing technical restrictions on automated querying.

We also ask that you:

+ *Make non-commercial use of the files* We designed Google Book Search for use by individuals, and we request that you use these files for personal, non-commercial purposes.

+ *Refrain from automated querying* Do not send automated queries of any sort to Google's system: If you are conducting research on machine translation, optical character recognition or other areas where access to a large amount of text is helpful, please contact us. We encourage the use of public domain materials for these purposes and may be able to help.

+ *Maintain attribution* The Google "watermark" you see on each file is essential for informing people about this project and helping them find additional materials through Google Book Search. Please do not remove it.

+ *Keep it legal* Whatever your use, remember that you are responsible for ensuring that what you are doing is legal. Do not assume that just because we believe a book is in the public domain for users in the United States, that the work is also in the public domain for users in other countries. Whether a book is still in copyright varies from country to country, and we can't offer guidance on whether any specific use of any specific book is allowed. Please do not assume that a book's appearance in Google Book Search means it can be used in any manner anywhere in the world. Copyright infringement liability can be quite severe.

About Google Book Search

Google's mission is to organize the world's information and to make it universally accessible and useful. Google Book Search helps readers discover the world's books while helping authors and publishers reach new audiences. You can search through the full text of this book on the web at `http://books.google.com/`

THE MYSTERY OF SUFFERING AND OTHER DISCOURSES.

E DE PRESSENSÉ.

THE

MYSTERY OF SUFFERING,

AND

OTHER DISCOURSES.

By the same author, preparing for publication,

IN ONE VOLUME, OCTAVO.

THE EARLY YEARS OF CHRISTIANITY;

A SEQUEL TO

"JESUS CHRIST: HIS TIMES, LIFE, AND WORK."

NOW READY.

A second and cheaper edition, in crown 8vo, price 9s., cloth.

JESUS CHRIST: HIS TIMES, LIFE, AND WORK.

FROM THE CONTEMPORARY REVIEW.—"One of the most valuable additions to Christian literature which the present generation has seen. . . . He has written on the greatest of all subjects, and has written with a simplicity of intention to instruct, with a ripeness of ability and learning, and Christian wisdom, and a largeness of apprehension well worthy to be devoted to the illustration of so great and sacred a theme."

FROM THE BRITISH QUARTERLY REVIEW.—"M. de Pressensé's work is characterized by the learning, patience, brilliance, and insight which have given him so high a place among the literary men of Europe."

FROM THE SUNDAY MAGAZINE.—"The work of an able and excellent author, whose appreciation of our Lord Jesus Christ, both in His person and in His work, is at once profound and discriminating, and whom no doubts or difficulties hinder from claiming the honour due to the name that is above every name. In point of learning, intellectual power, and that point and brilliancy of diction for which the French language is so remarkable when wielded by a master, the merit of this work is remarkably high."

THE

MYSTERY OF SUFFERING,

AND

OTHER DISCOURSES.

BY

E. DE PRESSENSÉ, D.D.,

Author of "Jesus Christ: His Times, Life, and Work."

London:

HODDER AND STOUGHTON,

27, PATERNOSTER ROW.

MDCCCLXVIII.

100. g/ 222.

Butler & Tanner,
The Selwood Printing Works,
Frome, and London.

TRANSLATOR'S PREFACE.

It is a common complaint of the sermon-hearers of our day, that fire and force are extinct in the pulpit. It is as common a complaint of the preachers, that a cold and critical generation has lost the power of hearing. The two recriminations may perhaps be taken as neutralizing each other: possibly it is those who cannot preach who for the most part complain of their hearers; possibly those who are dull of hearing are loudest in the outcry against the pulpit.

It is at least fair that, while the position of the preacher is thus assailed, his words should have the widest possible opportunity of vindicating themselves through the press, to an impartial public, or of receiving a weightier condemnation than that of any particular congregation. Even in this way the cause will scarcely have a fair trial; for while reasons can readily be adduced for the reputed decline of influence in the modern pulpit, it is less easy to estimate the indirect power for good of many a homely sermon, which the critic's scalpel may soon deprive of all logical unity or vitality.

Even the best sermons are submitted to a severe test, when they have to make their appeal, not through the animated voice, but through cold, unmodulated type. The ordeal must be yet more severe, when the thoughts of the preacher, beside being translated from the vocal to the silent utterance, are submitted to the yet further

transmutation into an alien tongue. It is much if, in such a case, while the form is preserved, the warmth and colour are not lost.

Many of the productions of the foreign pulpit have however recently become familiarized to the English reader in his own tongue; and we can scarcely doubt that those who have followed M. de Pressensé through his scholarly and loving exposition of the Life and Times of Jesus Christ, will welcome from the English press a volume of his eloquent sermons.

The "Mystery of Suffering," the first series in the volume now presented to the public, appeared in the *Pulpit Analyst* of this year, and is translated by the Rev. R. S. Ashton, B.A. The second series, which, while more miscellaneous in form, has also a unity of thought and purpose, appears now for the first time in English. The whole is the reproduction of a volume entitled "Etudes Evangéliques," published by M. de Pressensé in Paris at the close of the year 1867.

While local separation, and the yet wider barriers of languages and modes of thought foreign to our own, prevent the realization of that oneness which is the aim and ideal of a catholic Christianity, we cannot but rejoice in every opportunity of drawing closer the bonds of sympathy with our brethren in other lands, and thus anticipating in some little measure the time when, in perfect harmony, —a grander thing than perfect unison—every kindred, and tribe, and people, and tongue shall blend their homage to the Redeemer of the world.

ANNIE HARWOOD.

GREAT SHELFORD, CAMBRIDGE,
August, 1868.

CONTENTS.

PAGE

THE MYSTERY OF SUFFERING:—

I. THE ORIGIN OF SUFFERING 1
II. CONSOLATION 16
III. SUFFERING IN ITS BEARING ON CONVERSION . . 34
IV. SUFFERING IN RELATION TO THE CHRISTIAN LIFE . . 50
V. SUFFERING FOR THE TRUTH'S SAKE 67
VI. COMPASSION 82

CHRISTIAN MYSTICISM 99

THE VOICE OF THE CHURCH, AND THE CRY OF THE CHRISTIAN HEART 119

THE SINS OF RELIGIOUS SPEECH 151

THE SUPERNATURAL AT THE BAR OF CONSCIENCE . . 173

THE ADORATION OF MARY THE SISTER OF LAZARUS . 191

THE JUBILEE OF THE FRENCH REFORMATION . . 211

The Mystery of Suffering.

—o—

I.

The Origin of Suffering.

"Wherefore, as by one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin; so also death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned."—Rom. v. 12.

When Job in the midst of his distress was reviewing his past prosperity, he finished the picture of his former condition, as distressing as it is splendid, with these admirable words, "I dwelt as a king in the army, as one that comforteth the mourners." A profound and truly sublime saying, representing as it does consolation as a royal prerogative. I know of no nobler prerogative in the moral world; there is no power to be compared with it. History has often beheld men bound to triumphal cars, their opposition subdued, and the dominion of might established. Every day we see men compelling the admiration of their fellows by the display of their genius, or by the extent of their knowledge, and so establishing the dominion of mind. But the highest greatness consists in comforting those who mourn, in binding up broken hearts, in restoring youth and life to wasted souls, and in establishing the dominion of a love which triumphs over all our miseries. For the subjugation or humiliation of a people, violence is sufficient: savage forces, once let loose, will always prevail in this lower domain over the best organised tyranny. Nature's free daughters, according to the poet's expression, devouring flame or a raging sea, are mightier than an Attila to terrify and destroy. A metaphor will suffice

to dazzle the imagination, and too often a sophism will mislead the understanding; but you will not long deceive the man who is grappling with the hard realities of existence. Make him master of his pain, take away its sting, comfort him; and you have exercised the most powerful influence over him. Hence we do not hesitate to declare that if humanity has found a true comforter, capable of restoring its peace and joy, it has found its king; it has not to seek for a greater ruler. This is the decisive test of systems and religions. No mystery equals that of suffering; it overwhelms the mind, and breaks the heart. In the knot of human destiny this is the most inextricable part. To untie it, we must satisfy the mind and appease the soul; that is, we must have knowledge and power. Neither philosophy alone, nor feeling, even the noblest, can solve it. If this difficult problem has not yet forced itself upon us, it is because we have not awoke from the morning dream with which life begins. But sooner or later the illusion will be dissipated, either as regards ourselves or our friends. All along our path we meet with disease, poverty, and decrepitude; and we must ultimately acknowledge that, however brilliant the comedy may have been, its last act is always tragic. We need only to meet in the streets of our cities some mournful procession going the way of all the earth, and that will dispel our indifference. The time will come when we shall hear ascending heavenwards a general wail, the voice of humanity. And when life begins to trouble and to burden us, and we really look within upon ourselves, we shall discover that the human soul is a world still more desolate than the outer one; and, forgetting our prosperity at least for a moment, we shall hear the universal groan of an unhappy race rising far above all harmonies, whether sweet or brilliant; and then in our turn we shall ask, in all its awful solemnity, the great question which earth asks of heaven, "Why is suffering needful? Why, if there is a God on high, is His creature here below condemned to sorrow?"

Is it not a fact that we shall bestow our confidence on the man who can give us the true answer; while from him who cannot we shall turn away? However ingenious his theories, however well constructed his system, however eloquent his words, we shall reject him and seek elsewhere until we have found. Now as Christians we believe that we possess the solution of the problem, and we want to make every man see that we do. If we succeed in persuading you, will you not thus have the strongest possible proof in favour of our faith? Can any one say that it is not a reasonable faith, if, while directing us to the source of the bitter stream of tears, it also has power to wipe them away? No apology can compare with that which brings light to the mind and balm to the wounded heart! Love's own demonstration is that which triumphs by the blessings it conveys!

We shall consider successively the Origin of Suffering, its Remedy, its End as regards the several classes of sufferers, and the Glory in which it terminates when it becomes the holy and generous suffering of martyrdom or compassion. I do not desire to linger amongst the generalities of the question. I should like at once to take my afflicted brethren by the hand, and lead them to the feet of my Master, while I say to them, "Pour forth your heart into His, listen to His tender appeals!" But I cannot forget that the difficulties of the mind often hinder the peace of the heart. Have I not seen in the foremost ranks of the afflicted the sons of a sceptical age, urging on their way without God and without hope? All comfort will be powerless, as long as their diseased mind is not cured. Are we not all more or less affected by this malady of doubt? Is there not often uncertainty in our faith? Have we no need to establish it more firmly? What is more necessary for us all than to strengthen the shaken foundation of certainty? May these considerations help us to do this!

I shall pass rapidly under review the several solutions of the problem of suffering which have been elaborated

beyond the pale of Christianity, in order to bring out more clearly the beauty of the one given by the gospel.

I. We meet with two solutions equally false, though diametrically opposed to one another. 1. That of the optimist, who looks upon the world with a smile, and declares that, all things considered, its blessings equal and surpass its evils, and that human life is not so sombre as it has been represented to be. If we are to believe him, life follows its natural course, sometimes a little troubled and stormy, altering its banks like a river, but always flowing between those which were appointed for it from the beginning; nothing tragical has taken place in the history of humanity, we live in the best of all possible worlds. We shall not trouble ourselves to refute such a theory: it is enough to leave its advocates to a course of life which they regard as normal; we shall wait for them at the first rock against which they will dash themselves; we shall very soon be able to triumph over their indifference. In the meanwhile they will make very few proselytes; humanity, which likes to be amused and made to forget itself amid pleasure, does not like the fact of its sufferings to be denied. Nothing exasperates and irritates it so much as these glowing but deceptive pictures of its condition. In fact, as it has been truly said, in all its myths, in all the religions which it has created, in all the poetry which it has produced, it has simply told to itself its own sad history, its great calamity, and its condemnation. "It will look upon nothing else but its old sufferings, and I am not surprised that it never grows weary of the spectacle. It loves to see and touch its wounds, even at the risk of re-opening them. This is the reason why when we seek pleasure in poetry, we are not satisfied unless we find tears in it."* In short, is it not this element which constitutes the great charm of the noble art? When your heart has been beating with generous admiration, and you have felt its holy tremor, it is because you have heard

* Ozanam, "Les Germains et les Francs," t. i., p. 214.

some echo of the great human wail, and because the poet or artist in the representation of some special suffering has reached a depth of grief which carried you to the very beginning of all our woes, to the immense calamity of a fallen race. Optimism, before being condemned by the gospel, is cursed by all the wretched, and never more so than by those who, after a brief period of delusion, at length hear the striking of that terrible hour to which every man must come.

2. At the opposite extreme of those who say that all is right, we meet with those who say that *all is wrong;* that human existence is cursed in itself; that the whole world is nothing but a hell, whose innumerable circles enclose all created beings. According to them, it is the very condition of the creature to be helplessly abandoned to evil, because good is only to be found in the Infinite and Absolute Being, and that inasmuch as we are finite beings we cannot be united to Him. Do not suppose that we are going to seek in some obscure philosophy for the foolish dreams of a recluse. These ideas lie at the foundation of one of those forms of religion which have the largest number of adherents at the present day. Buddhism is still the faith of millions of men; and Asia has no greater curse than this fatal religion, which can speak only evil of a world it is powerless to save. Buddha does not merely say, "There is misfortune in life," but "Life itself is a misfortune, and there is only one thing for man to do, and that is to deliver himself from it as soon as possible, to direct all his efforts towards annihilation or to the complete absorption of himself in the Infinite." His doctrine and his morality are, death for death's sake. Everything in us protests against such a religion. There is not one of our heart-pulses that does not revolt from it, and from all that resembles it in ancient and modern stoicism. The stoic philosophy, under the name of insensibility, urges us to annihilation. It is useless to tell us to die erect, while at the same time it invites us to die by an effort to attain to impassibility, the proud nirvana of the

west. The blessings with which our existence abounds preclude us from admitting for a single moment that an irremediable curse rests upon it. We have no sympathy with those who see in God the yawning abyss of an infinite gloom. We believe in the living God, and we have seen the smile of His love shining upon us.

II. We meet with two other solutions of the problem of suffering, that are very widely accepted in our day. The first sees in suffering a *beneficent necessity*, a condition of progress for man; whilst in the second system it serves to *expiate and repair his faults*. We reject them both as an offence against God. In fact, if you are willing to believe with Christians that suffering has laid hold of a world not originally made for it, and has become, through the Divine goodness, a means of progress, you make it a part of the original plan of creation before any moral cause has let it loose; that is, you refer it directly to God; He has decreed it; it is a result of His good pleasure. He might have assigned other conditions to our development; He might have brought us to maturity without placing us in this terrible school. But this He was not willing to do; it has pleased Him to devote these myriads of beings to suffering, satisfied if by all these woes He can secure the ultimate happiness and full development of the few chosen creatures who do not sink amid the rude and frightful confusion! Understand me well, I am combating the notion that suffering was *originally* assigned to us as a condition of progress. If it was so assigned, before we ourselves had rendered it necessary, this was an arbitrary act, there was no absolute need for its infliction; and I have the right to complain, and to say to the Almighty,—"If Thou couldst have urged us to what is good along a smooth path, where our feet would not have been cut by the sharp stones, why hast Thou not done so? And if Thou couldst have avoided piercing our hearts with the goad with which Thou drivest on our tottering steps, why hast Thou taken it into Thy mighty hand? What have I done to Thee? I did not ask Thee

for being. Who art Thou, O God, who takest delight in smiting?"

We also reject the idea which regards our sufferings as an *atonement for our faults.* How can a tear blot out a sin? If this tear springs from a penitent heart, and if it flows with our prayers, it will have power to obtain our pardon; but it is not the suffering in itself—the suffering apart from the moral sentiment—which brings us the blessing; it is the sentiment which pervades it; and the pain is useless, except as it manifests the reality of this sentiment. What we reject is atonement through suffering alone. Those who hold the theory form no idea of what it is which has to be expiated, of the awful character of the evil committed. They talk of faults, and not of sins; they imagine that a few sufferings will be sufficient to make the balance even. Ah! they would not think so, if they knew what sin is, and how hateful it is in the eyes of the Most Holy!

How could the sufferings of all the creatures blot out a single sin? How could they cause that which has been to exist no longer? All the oceans could not wash out this moral stain. What more is there in tears, which are only tears, that is to say, which simply express suffering and not repentance? Further, there are different kinds of suffering. There are cursed pains, namely such as lead to cursing. Murmuring and blasphemy are regarded as faults, even by the least delicate conscience. If we examine our sufferings closely, we shall soon see that, far from paying our debts to God by this means, we contract fresh ones. Lastly, and still looking at purely passive suffering, I cannot possibly conceive what it sets right. Doubtless, we admit that a lost race cannot be saved without suffering; but, as we shall see, the sorrow which saves is different from a passive sorrow: it is a free sacrifice; it is the manliest, strongest, and holiest action which can be performed beneath the skies. There is no analogy between the august doctrine of redemption and the idea which we are combating. Purely passive suffer-

ing is a consequence of evil; but it can neither repair, nor destroy, nor redeem it. This will not move the heart of God; no, not though it were infinite! One additional wretched person does not make one less guilty person; thousands of unhappy beings do not tend to increase the sum of good; and though you should show me all passive sufferings, present and future, heaped together on the same head and at the same moment, if you have nothing else to offer to God, if there is not in this infinite pain the display of an infinite holiness, nothing has been accomplished towards the pardon and salvation of men. What idea do we form of God when we imagine that He can only be appeased by being avenged, and avenged in the literal sense of the word! What? He will not pardon till all the tears and blood of His enemy have flowed? That is a mockery of pardon which is nothing but the retaliation of heaven against earth! If suffering, an infinite suffering, enters into atonement, as we shall show it does, it is not suffering considered simply as such; and those who think that our sorrows, regarded merely as sorrows, appease the wrath of God, form as false an idea of the matter as those who think that He has inflicted them upon His creatures without a moral necessity. Their god resembles the savage chief who will not be appeased towards his enemy till he has dipped his arrow in his blood. If this is their god, he is not ours. Such a god inspires us with horror; we cannot perceive his justice any more than his love. He is a Moloch, who is honoured just in proportion to the number of human victims consumed upon his altar.

The distressing part of such theories is that, to all our woes, which they pretend to explain, they add another, and that the worst of all; they hide God's face, they take Him from us. They do not lessen the miseries of earth; and when we raise our eyes to heaven to seek for help, lo! it is empty and dismal. As long as my God remains, nothing is lost; but when He is taken from me then all fails. How can I keep myself from despair? Who

shall deliver me? Of what use is it to call, like the psalmist, for the wings of the dove or even of the eagle? They would only bear me into a gloomy desert, since if I ascended I should find nothing but a *dead* god. But it is not so, ye afflicted ones of the earth; you have a Father in heaven. Above, all is bright, increasingly bright; from all your darkness there does not arise one shadow to cover the face of your God. Our sufferings condemn none but ourselves, and the gospel is called good news simply because it gives us the solution of the painful problem. Let us take this as our first consolation!

At the outset I am struck with the fair and emphatic manner in which the question is stated. Christianity does not lower our conception of the enemy it seeks to destroy. Certain of victory, it presents him just as he is in reality. No picture of suffering can equal that which the Bible has drawn; it is as worthy of admiration in this respect as for its descriptions of the glory and felicity of God; and it is precisely because it brings together and contrasts true and eternal happiness with our troubled and wretched life, that it reaches a pathos so touching. It has given condemnation its true name, the one which best expresses, in a single word, all that it is and all that it blights and destroys. Our text calls it death! It is in fact the power of death which has stricken the ground beneath our feet with barrenness, so that our food has to be drawn from it by the sweat of our brow; which has filled the air we breathe with deadly vapours; which cleaves to our body and stealthily undermines it till it lays it in the dust whence it came; and which at last, placing its iron hand on our hearts, presses, stifles, and breaks them! This world belongs to death. It is his pale kingdom; his breath passes over every flower, withers every life, and freezes every soul. Man is a culprit, an outlaw, the constant prey of the destroying power which breaks off all the branches of the tree one after another, before cutting it down at the root by a last blow of the axe. But the Bible is not satisfied

with these general features; it not only describes pain as it is in itself, but also each of our sufferings. From Rachel, who will not be comforted because her children are not, to the poor man covered with sores and laid at the rich man's door, there is not one of the sad scenes of human life which is not depicted in a few simple, profound words, that are never forgotten and that leave an ineffaceable impression on the mind. It does more; it lays open to our view the heart of the afflicted, it tells their sorrows, it repeats their complaints. I hear the tearful, groaning, and yet believing prayers of David in his various trials. I am made acquainted with his moral crises, with the conflict of feelings by which his heart is torn. The inner tempest, the nameless anguish of Job, cruelly smitten and unjustly accused; his faint-heartedness, his murmurings, his despairing cry from out of the deep waters,—everything is revealed to me in vehement words. The bitter tears of Peter after his fall, and the sigh of weariness which Paul heaves, teach me to know other but no less painful crises of the soul. If there is no height to which the Bible does not rise, there is no depth to which it does not descend. I can never go so far in moral agony, but what it has gone before me. Yes; though I should descend into those abysses where every bright ray seems to be quenched, I should meet with the traces of an inspired writer. If I am in anguish, the Bible is in anguish with me, like the God who gave it me; and this is why it is the book of the afflicted, written for them, and as I would even say, written by them.

We have now to inquire what Origin the Bible ascribes to Suffering, the gravity of which it certainly has not underrated. "*By sin,*" says St. Paul, "death entered into the world." You understand his meaning. It follows that, unless we attribute sin to God Himself, we must completely exonerate Him in regard to this terrible invasion of our world by suffering. Not one of our afflictions is attributable to Him. He no more created this

world for sorrow than for sin. When God looked down upon His finished work of creation, "he beheld all that he had made," says the Book of Genesis, "and lo, it was very good." How could it have been otherwise? After the creation of each fresh series of beings, we read these words, which sound like a sublime refrain, "God blessed them!" Every creature has been hailed with this blessing on the very threshold of life. Creation is a manifestation of eternal love, and as it were a pouring forth of its wealth in time and in space. "God saw all that he had made, and behold it was very good." Wherever He turned His eye, He beheld happiness and glory. The scale of being was bright with joy and life; the blessing rose and increased from step to step, up to the creatures who were nearest to God, and in whom His image shone. Who can say what God saw when at one glance He beheld the young and glorious world, which had just issued from His hands and which bore the impress of His perfections? Who can describe the scene of beauty illumined by the first sunbeams that shone on this smiling earth, none of whose voices was plaintive? Who can describe the spectacle it presented when, summing up in one all the blessings He had lavished upon it, God blessed it on the seventh day, and rested to contemplate a work worthy of Himself? If you allege the traces of death that furrow the ground on which we stand, and the vast ruins of former worlds, I reply that, notwithstanding those thousands of years, we are but of yesterday, and are ignorant of the dramas that may have been enacted in a former world. It remains none the less certain that we are warranted in saying, with regard to each of God's creations, as they came forth from His hands, "He beheld it, and lo, it was very good."

What then is the great destroyer, "the great interpolator of creation," to employ Tertullian's expression? Who has devastated this lovely world? Who has opened its gates to suffering and death? Christianity answers with a single word, the word of our text, "By sin death

entered into the world." I have not now to consider the grave question of sin itself; I take it in its simplest and most elementary signification. "Sin," according to the words of St. John, is "the transgression of the law;" it is rebellion against the will of God. Nor shall I enter into the question of original sin; here also it is enough to say with St. Paul, "that death and suffering reign over all men, because all have sinned." Is there any one of my readers who has not sinned, and who is perfectly pure? If there is, then I admit he has some right to bring forward his claim; but if there is not one but must say, "I also have been rebellious; I also have broken God's law," in that case, of what can we complain? Let us be silent, and admit the justice of God. Is not sin disorder, and the worst kind of disorder? Is it not the height of anarchy, is it not the violation of the law of the moral world? And you would have this disorder, this anarchy, bring no consequences in their train; you would have everything be as if order reigned! But, first, this cannot be; sin not only produces suffering, it is its very principle and essence. Either say that God is not the supreme Good, or admit that the creature cannot break the bond that unites him to God without cutting himself off from well-being and happiness. Either say that the soul is not made for God, degrade it to the rank of one of the lower creatures not destined to the higher life; or admit that it loses this higher life, that it suffers and dies, by violently separating itself from God. Suffering, immeasurable suffering, is inherent in evil. You cannot prevent its being so; and as long as rebellion exists, suffering will follow sin as the shadow follows the substance: or, more correctly speaking, it cannot be severed from it. To ask God that it might be otherwise would be to ask Him to cease from being God, in other words, from being the Source of life, glory, and happiness.

But I go farther, and I maintain that God is not content to let evil produce suffering by a sort of natural law; He has *willed* that it should be thus. He has inter-

vened to punish and smite the rebel. It is He who has directly established this relation between suffering and sin. Death in creation is not a common accident, as the superficial thinker believes; it is a decree of the sovereign will. Chastisement alone re-establishes order in a world given up to the anarchy of sin; and he who has not been willing that God should reign over his heart comes under the dominion of death, and thus, having rejected the Father's love, he is made to feel the heavy hand of the righteous God. "*Death has reigned over all men, because all have sinned;*" and through it the offended God still rules, but in the way in which rebels are ruled. Not that God finds any satisfaction or vengeance in the chastisement which He inflicts. He does not willingly afflict the children of men; but He has taken His own law as it stands, and given it His sanction. Consequently, it is not God, but his own sin, that the guilty man must blame when he suffers; for he has of his own accord made God's law his enemy, and has placed himself under the sword.

The easy indulgent god whom the world has fashioned for itself is not our God. We avow boldly that we believe in the God who punishes evil, because we believe in the God who loves! A god who cannot punish, who cares neither for good nor evil, is a god who does not trouble himself about us; and his goodness is simply a cold indifference. Such a distant and scornful majesty fills me with indescribable fear. It is a terrible thing, doubtless, to fall into the hands of the living God; but there is something more terrible still, and that is to fall into the hands of a dead god, a phantom god, that is to say into the empty void. What can we make of a common (*banal*) love, which can neither be offended nor wounded? The heart of a god who smiles at evil is of too little worth to be cared about. He who is indignant at sin, and smites it, He only can love. He does not dwell in an inaccessible heaven, a cold region which cannot be affected by an act of sin, because it cannot be affected by a prayer. He is a Father; and a father does

not look resignedly upon the degradation of his child, nor does he give him any rest in his ruin. Holy severities of our God, we discover in you how His love burns; for His love is also a consuming fire!

This terrible question of the origin of suffering is thus mixed up with that of the origin of evil. Sin as well as death proceed not from the holy and gracious God, but from the perverted will of the creature! If now you are indignant because He has allowed the guilty act to be accomplished, to be renewed, and to bring with it a whole train of sufferings, I reply that you forget that God has really willed the liberty of His chosen creature. He has put his destiny into his hands. Nor could He have done otherwise, because we were made to love Him, and love without liberty is nothing! Nor did He wish for a heart at any price; He wished for a heart that would give itself; and before a heart can give itself it must belong to itself. Hence the solemn probation through which we have to pass. Hence liberty, with all its perils. Hence the possibility of holiness and heaven; but also the possibility of rebellion and hell. Hence the glory of angels and the fall of men; for liberty must be maintained both as regards its terrible as well as its beneficent results, or else it is simply an illusion. This respect for liberty God has shown in a striking manner in the history of our race, in those numberless miseries which our rebellion has let loose. When we consider all that has resulted from a single bad determination, we might wish to reject and abdicate so terrible a power. But this is not allowed. What then can we do but cast ourselves into the mighty arms of our God? For I cannot forget that, in presence of my liberty, He has maintained His own, the sovereign liberty of His love, which can intervene to save me. I have only to rest in it, and my weakness becomes strength! Ah! far from the feeling of liberty being calculated to fill man with pride, it is calculated to terrify him; and the more he feels himself responsible, and master of his immortal destinies, the

more he must feel the urgent need of grace, which alone can restore and preserve! As we consider the lamentable issue of the first test by which humanity was tried, and as we see that through the disobedience of one man death passed upon all the race, what can we do but tremble and invoke with tears the Divine help, without which we cannot triumph over evil!

Let this be the result of our reflections on the origin of our sufferings. Let us draw from them a great and salutary lesson of humility; let us smite on our breasts. In the vast sorrows which desolate our world, let us see the extent of the sins of humanity. We have sinned, O my God; we have done what is displeasing in Thy sight, and Thou wilt be found just when Thou shalt judge us. Out of a thousand counts of accusation, we cannot answer Thee to one. Shrink not from descending into the depths of humiliation. The very same truth which casts you down will raise you up. The more you lay suffering to the charge of the fallen creature, the more purely and brightly will the idea of God shine above you like the star that lightens up the darkest night. As long as you can believe in a holy and gracious God, you will be able to regain everything; nothing will be irrevocably lost; everything can be saved and restored by Him. To convince yourself of this, listen to the gospel hymn which resounds so sweetly in our hearts:—"Peace on Earth." This hymn was sung when the Deliverer was coming down to our dark shores. To save us, He had left His throne and His crown, and all the royal and eternal glory which belongs to Him as the only begotten Son of the Father. But by condescending to our rough path, He has won another royalty, the sceptre of which is a reed, and the diadem a crown of thorns. This Man of Sorrows is the Great and Sovereign Comforter of our unhappy race, as we shall show you in our next discourse. Here then is the true King of our souls, He of whom the patriarch Job was only a feeble image. To Him be glory for ever!

II.

Consolation.

"He hath carried our sorrows."—Isa. liii. 4.

This is a world of suffering; such is the summing up of our first discourse. No long process of argument was needed, to convince you that human life, when left to itself, is full of weariness and sadness. Be silent for one moment, and you will hear a general and unceasing cry rising heavenwards—earth's note in the universal concert. Indeed, you need only listen to your own heart. No matter who you are, you are either threatened with suffering, or actually subject to it. You have been smitten, or you know that you will be; and when life's wave really rises from the depths of the soul, it always flows forth in tears, for its spring is bitter. We have not drawn a sensational picture; we have simply said, Look around and remember! You who are afflicted know full well that in the day of your desolation nothing extraordinary befals you. It is happiness which astonishes you, and not affliction. And yet you have not been able to form the habit of suffering *without hope;* everything in you protests against an irremediable misfortune. Are you mistaken? This is the inquiry we wish now to institute. Be sure of this, that you are not mistaken unless you have formed too low an idea of consolation. If you count on a complete deliverance, no matter how lofty your aspirations, your hopes may be realized. Comfort your hearts and minds with the thought that everything in regard to happiness may be recovered. We do not offer you an imperfect consolation; this would but serve to increase your distress, by adding to it the bitterest deception. If I could not lay before you a source

of real comfort, I would be silent, so great is my fear of aggravating your sufferings by worthless palliatives, of adding poison to a wound for which I have no sovereign balm. If I do not refrain from this attempt to comfort you, it is because I know in whom I have believed.

Let us call to mind the cause of the disease which we have to heal, so that we may thoroughly understand the nature of the remedy! If our misfortune simply consisted in having lost the true knowledge of God, everything would be set right so soon as by means of a supernatural revelation we had regained true notions respecting Him. But it is far otherwise: we are mortally wounded, there is a void in our heart, we have lost eternal life. Floods of light thrown upon my misery would not lessen it, they would only blind my diseased eyes. An explanation of suffering, though given by God, would be of no avail; it would leave me just as I am, but with despair in addition; and it is truly of such cold and powerless light that we are justified in saying that it is cursed by such as find it. Pray do not enlighten me therefore, if you cannot comfort me, and be not so cruel as to tear away the bandage which still affords me some delusion. If light, and that too Divine light, will only increase my torment, what shall we think of the glimmering light of human systems? Away, you who theorize about suffering, and can do no more than descant upon it: away! for in the time of weeping we cannot endure your reasonings. If you have no means of delivering us, if you have nothing but sententious phrases to offer, put your hands on your mouths; enwrap yourselves in silence! It is enough to suffer; but to suffer and listen to you is more than we can bear. If Job's mouth was nigh unto blasphemy, the blame is yours, ye miserable comforters, who talked instead of weeping. If I must suffer, then I pray for suffering without fine talk!

Besides, we know well the consolations of human wisdom. Through the course of ages they have not varied; they may be summed up in these two counsels: forget

your suffering, or subdue it by proud resignation. The first is the epicurean method; and though it has altered its form, its language, and its name, it has not ceased to pass from mouth to mouth. The second is the stoical method, and is as universal and undying as pride. Neither the one nor the other has comforted or strengthened a single heart. Forget! It is easy to say so; but do you not see that the very effort to which I must give myself will render the thought I want to dispel more bitter and piercing? Suppose I succeed in the attempt, do you not perceive how much I shall lose by this cowardice? I shall deny all that is highest and noblest in my nature; it is the very best part of myself which is the source of suffering—the feeling of imperfection, the thirst for the ideal and the infinite, the distressing intuition of the tragic reality of human existence, or the tender and hallowed memory of a well-beloved being who has disappeared from the land of the living. Are there not in your heart hallowed griefs which you are unwilling to forego, because you know that if you lost them you would feel yourselves of less worth and importance? Were any one to offer you the cup of intoxicating pleasure as you stand by the grave which has just received the mortal remains that were so dear to you, you would indignantly reject it. Yet this is what the world does, in regard to a far greater and deeper source of grief. The human soul is destitute of God; this is the secret of its sadness and unrest. Now worldly life is so ordered as to make it forget both its torment and its dignity; it tends to hurry the soul into the outer whirl of events, to rob it of the feeling of its past greatness and of its present misery, and to plunge it into a state of feverish excitement at once vain and profitless. Leave such miserable comfort for low and vulgar minds, who will readily exchange a noble destiny for a life of sense; say to yourselves that forgetfulness is the soul's death, and preserve in the depths of your heart the holy wound which God alone can heal.

Stoicism, I admit, shows more respect to human dignity. Do not give way to your pain, it says to the afflicted; suffer, and if need be, die erect, showing a bold front to adversity. Prove that you are a man, and that you do not bend before the storm like a reed. But of what use will it be to dissemble your suffering? Such proud insensibility is simply an illusion; the heart is none the less distracted behind this haughty mask. The most burning tears are those which are repressed and which flow inwardly: it is with disguised sufferings as with wounds from which the blood finds no escape; they are the most difficult to cure, and the most deadly. It is vain to talk about the force of events, or the inflexible order of the universe, beneath which we must allow ourselves to be crushed without saying a word. Such playing at resignation may receive the plaudits of spectators; but who can describe our distress, when we look within and see every fiction vanish, and discover that our weariness and misery have increased? The challenge we fling at destiny is returned with cruel irony. Thus stoical pride ends in despair. It carries with it its own refutation and punishment.

Let us leave all such poor consolation, and ask how He who has bidden the weary and heavy laden come to Him has fulfilled His promise. And first of all let us bear in mind that the gospel goes back to the beginning and deals with our misery at its very source. We have pointed out a great act of rebellion as the origin of our woes. The creature separated itself from God, from Him who is life, goodness, and felicity; this is sin, this is suffering. There is nothing arbitrary in the bond that unites them; it was formed by the hand of the most holy God Himself. If this be so, it follows that it is useless to wish to overcome suffering without overcoming sin, and that we cannot take away the former while we allow the latter to remain. If then there is any hope for the recovery of our ruined race, if any comfort is reserved for it, such comfort can only consist in the

destruction of sin itself. As sin is the result of a determined act of the human will, restoration can only come through a free decree of Divine sovereignty. God has been as free in His work of salvation as in that of creation. No necessity of any kind whatsoever constrained Him to raise His fallen creature. If any one restricts himself to saying that God's love impelled Him to it, I am ready to admit this; but if the question is stated thus, Could He possibly not forgive? I answer boldly in the affirmative; for it is the right of not forgiving which constitutes the beauty of forgiveness, just as the power of not obeying constitutes in the creature the beauty of his obedience. If you make pardon a necessity, take care! You will soon come to make sin necessary. If restoration enters into the eternal plan of creation, so also does evil. It is of no use to affirm that in effect evil has brought about such a display of Divine love as could not have taken place under other conditions, and that man, on whose behalf a God humbled Himself, has attained to a degree of glory which would have been impossible without the fall. We should rejoin, How do you know? Are you acquainted with all the resources of Divine munificence? Have you sounded the depths of infinite love? Who has told you that if man had remained innocent, a less noble destiny was reserved for him than for fallen and degraded man? Who has told you that he would not have been called to an equally intimate and mysterious union with the Divinity? It is dangerous to establish the superiority of evil to good on the ground of their consequences. We will never exclaim Blessed mistake! By so doing we should impugn the law of creation; we should be sacrificing the unalterable notion of justice, and forgetting how much the mistake has cost God to repair it. Besides, if I am not absolutely certain of the final salvation of every human being, this is enough to keep me from saying Blessed mistake! I will rather say, Unhappy mistake, which has caused so many tears and so much blood

to flow, and which has peopled the world of the lost! Unhappy mistake! but one gloriously repaired by my God; for the glory of His love shines all the more brightly because of the apparently desperate condition of man after the fall. We believe therefore that if events had followed their regular course the rebel's case would have been hopeless, he would have been lost.

Supposing sin to exist, condemnation follows as surely as effect follows cause. You can no more prevent death issuing from evil, than you can stop the ear from growing out of the grain of wheat. "When lust hath conceived it bringeth forth sin, and when sin hath conceived it bringeth forth death." This is the natural order of things. Those who will content themselves with it should know to what they bind themselves; they should know that as long as they reject the supernatural order, they will find themselves imprisoned in that iron circle which can never open of itself, and from which there is no escape till God has broken it. Now He never breaks it except by the free intervention of His love, which snaps the chain of natural effects. Do not let us narrow this great question of the supernatural, which has been so thoroughly taken up by the men of our day. When God, in the full exercise of His liberty, and in presence of the degraded being who had offended Him, and who deserved nothing short of death, held out a helping hand instead of smiting him, and thus stayed the merited condemnation, then the supernatural order invaded the natural order of things, then man could see that his God is not bound by logic, and that the Legislator is superior to His law. A God who pardons, who pardons freely, is the greatest of miracles. To make a star go back in the firmament is a poor prodigy, compared with the act of mercy which has stayed in its course the condemnation of the human race.

Tell me not of a god who cannot forsake his ease, and who is in a measure bound by the work of his own hands. Such a god is the Eternal Becoming (*devenir*), the universal

life which can never be apprehended amidst the confusion and dispersion of things; he has never been met; he has never been spoken to; he has never loved, for a single act of love would disarrange the immutable laws of which he is the symbol rather than the author. Whether he is presented to us as the monstrous idol of modern pantheism, made of mud and clay, or whether he is dwindled down into the cold and impalpable idea of pure reason, this pretended god reckons his worshippers at the present moment by thousands. Every one who takes but one step beyond the strait path of virtue is irresistibly drawn towards him. We have seen noble minds fall from bright regions, all aglow with the love of the unfettered Deity, into the cold region of logical necessity. Woe to any who in the present day descend from the sphere of love and adoration! Vertigo seizes them, and there is no stopping them in their fall. I, for one, am perfectly sure that when I can no longer believe in the living God and in the supernatural order of things based on His free love, on that very day I shall curse life, and shall regard it as nothing better then the dried rind of a fruit, fit only to be trodden under foot.

Let us come back to the God of our conscience, to the God of the gospel, who is the God of the living; and let us consider what He has done to save us. Sin and death have just entered the world. A free course lies open for their destructive agency. The God who beheld the works of His hands on the seventh day, and said, "Lo! it is all very good," has beheld it again; and lo! it is all very evil—everything, from the sky covered with a veil of sadness to the earth which bringeth forth thorns—everything, from the countless beings which the principle of disorder has set in arms one against another to the man and woman who walk, weeping as they go, along a path on which the curse has fallen, and who hide their confusion beneath the trees of the garden, the witnesses of their rebellion. Yes, everything was very evil: servile fear, instead of security and happiness; a desert, instead of a paradise;

death, instead of life; corruption, instead of innocence; and already a confused clamour arose from this rebellious world. Then a voice was heard in the heavens; it was the voice of Him who leaves the ninety and nine sheep, to go after the poor lost one,—of Him who does not forsake the prodigal son but waits for him. It was an august and merciful voice, the same which had spoken to the void, and the void had answered; and this voice said, "Comfort ye, comfort ye my people." We would say with the prophet, "Hear, O ye heavens, and give silence, O earth"; and ye happy spirits who live with God, and have never left Him, be ye confounded. Ye have never seen a manifestation of love equal to this! Ye have witnessed the wonders of creative love; and in your radiant beauty and pure splendour ye are yourselves its most perfect work. Well, ye have seen nothing, nothing comparable with what ye are about to witness! This language, addressed to these poor and contemptible beings, is more than all that the universe has heard; it is more than the word which called forth the light and bade the first dawn arise; for it is the language of pardon. Here is not only a God who raises beings up towards Himself, but also one who humbles Himself towards fallen beings, and who does this simply because He wills to do so, and without in any wise affecting His perfect right to punish. "Comfort ye, comfort ye my people."

If we are to accept a certain theology, the whole of redemption was effected on the day when the word of pardon was uttered. According to it, there is no necessity for anything serious and painful to be transacted between God and man. Pardon brings salvation to every man who accepts it, and revelation has no other end than to assure us of this pardon. The flowers at our feet, and the azure sky above our heads, proclaim it gloriously, and the cross can only repeat it with greater energy. Thus, reconciliation is merely a declaration of Divine love. Christianity does not present the consolation which it offers, under such smiling aspects; for the

human conscience could not believe in such a redemption. God's rights are inscribed in the conscience; it knows that there has been a frightful disturbance of the relations between the Creator and the creature. Sin rises up between it and God; and as long as sin remains, the way of access is not open. Of what use is it therefore to be pardoned, says the guilty man, if I cannot lay hold of the pardon? Rebellion has hollowed out an abyss between God and myself, and you cannot help me to cross it by flinging a few flowers into it; it must be filled up, and how can this be done except by an act of reparation? It is well if God is willing to return to man; but His merciful design cannot be realized if man himself does not return to Him, if he does not yield his heart to Him. Love implies reciprocation. God gives me His heart; but this will be useless if I do not give Him mine. You see then that consolation is freely, but not unconditionally, offered. It cannot be efficacious until the world which desires to be comforted has replied to the heaven which seeks to comfort, and until the formidable obstacle of sin has been removed; and this is the reason why God calls for a comforter.

Who then shall comfort this afflicted people? It cannot be one of their own children; for then we should say to him, "Comforter, comfort thyself. Physician, heal thyself. How canst thou remove the burden beneath which thou art bowed down?" The Divine call has resounded on earth in vain: no one, either sage or prophet, has come forward to answer it. It has resounded in heaven; but no happy spirit has accepted it. An angel could not understand us in our misfortune; a son of light knows nothing but the purest happiness; he could not represent our lost race; there would be no close and natural bond between us and him. God still cries, "Comfort ye, comfort ye my people." At length a voice answers, a voice issuing from the throne of glory, and this voice says, "I am ready to comfort Thy people." Do you object that He who speaks thus needs Himself to be comforted? But

He is the only and well-beloved Son, and before Him the heavens bow and worship. You cannot say that He is a stranger to the race He wishes to save; for it is made in His image, it enjoys a ray of His brightness in its soul; in Him it finds its perfection, for its ideal is not below but above; its destiny is not to descend, but to ascend. It was originally made to be closely united to Him. According to John's profound teaching, when He came amongst men, "he came unto his own." He alone could descend from so lofty to so low a station, and thus truly become the Son of man.

We ask you to observe that He had not to represent a race still pure and crowned with glory and honour like the angels: no, He had to represent a proscribed and unhappy race. He beheld it just as it was, without any illusion; from the height of His glory, He looked compassionately upon it in its distress and poverty. He had a burning desire to save it, precisely because it was degraded and unhappy. In His eyes this immense misfortune was an immense attraction. He wished to descend to the level of man, that He might raise him up to Himself, and thus renew the broken bond between man and God. When He said, "Here am I to comfort," it was as if He had said, "Here am I to serve, here am I to suffer, here am I to die!" He came, and He has borne our sorrows.

How feeble are all these illustrations, if we compare them with the bold expression of St. Paul, "he made himself of no reputation." * We are more and more convinced that we must accept these words in their literal sense. The Son of God really stripped Himself of His glory in order to save us; though rich, He became poor. His poverty was not in appearance, He really gave up all that constitutes the splendour of Divinity. Do not let us believe that the God in Him remains the impassive

* The French rendering of the Greek words, *ἑαυτὸν ἐκένωσεν*, is *il s'est anéanti*, which means literally "he made himself nothing."

spectator of the humiliation of the man, and that the Divine nature hovers in regions eternally bright, while the human nature is given up to all kinds of reproaches. No: such distinctions destroy the unity of the person; and the self-despoilment of Jesus Christ, thus understood, is nothing but a fiction. Of what did He strip Himself, if He thus retained all the glory of His Divinity? His humanity would in that case be nothing but an outer garment; and whether you cover it with mud or tear it, His real person is not touched. He lost nothing; but then what did He retain? For our part, we firmly believe that by becoming man He, in so doing, limited His Divinity, He stripped Himself for a time of the infinity which had belonged to Him from all eternity, and also of His absolute self-existence, for otherwise He could neither have been born nor have died. Here is the whole mystery of the incarnation—a mystery than which there is not a greater, nor one so incapable of being explained. On the other hand, there is not one whose necessity is more clearly demonstrated to the reason of the Christian; for if the sorrows of man must be borne in order to his being saved, then the Eternal Word can only do this by quitting (*sortir*) the honours of the Divine life; in other words, by making Himself of no reputation. This despoiling of Himself does not in reality detract from His glory, seeing that it is a result of His will, and that to restrain one's power is still to use it. On the contrary, the more He despoils Himself, the more His glory increases, the more His love shines forth, the more resplendent is His moral royalty. But we must not deal in subtilties where the language of Scripture is clear and precise. In this Man who has "no form nor comeliness," in this Man who appeared on our condemned earth in the guise of a servant, let us recognise with St. Paul a God who hath humbled Himself, even the same who, according to the words of our text, hath borne our sorrows!

This is surely the Comforter we need! For—

1. He is an *afflicted Man,* the most afflicted of all the human race, a Man of sorrows. If He wishes to sympathise, He has only to recall the past. We cannot take a single step in our gloomy path, without finding some traces of Him. We cannot light upon an affliction through which He has not passed before us. He knows what suffering is, from that which affects our bodies to that which withers our souls. O ye who lie on beds of sickness, tortured with cruel pain, He knows the nature of the physical suffering which reacts on your inner life through the delicate bonds connecting soul and body! O ye who eat the bread of charity, and are distressed by all the cares of penury, He knows what poverty is! The most indigent have at least had a cradle in which to be born, and a place where to lay their heads; the Son of man was reduced to envy the birds of heaven their nests, and the foxes their holes. O ye who have been overwhelmed with reproach, calumny, insult, and mockery, He knows what ignominy is; He knows it as you can never know it! O ye who bend and shudder over the open tomb, He knows what sorrow is, and His hot tears fell into the tomb where His friend was laid! O ye who mourn not only for a friend, but also for a friendship, ye from whom life, and not death, has taken a heart on which you leaned, ye who have been forsaken, ye who have seen your brother's hand raised against you, He knows what abandonment and betrayal are, He knows these things as you can never know them, —He who was sacrificed by a people whom He had loaded with His benefits, forsaken by His disciples, denied by one apostle, and sold by another! I defy you to point out a suffering which He has not known and traversed before you. He was made like unto you in all things, except sin. He knows what sorrow is, and this is why He can comfort. This is why those who weep of their own accord turn to Him of whom it is said, "Jesus wept." This is why He only can heal the bleeding wounds of the human heart. This is why His words are so gentle, so tender, so gracious; for the wounded spirit,

they have all the holy balm of tears of compassion. Ye afflicted ones, draw near therefore to the throne of mercy with confidence; you have not a high-priest who cannot be touched with a feeling of your infirmities.

2. Jesus Christ has not only shared our sorrows, He has *redeemed our sins.* Observe that He truly represents humanity, not merely because He is its ideal type, but also because He has entered into full communion with its sufferings and made Himself partaker of its destiny. He has thoroughly entered into our sad destiny, He has placed Himself at the very centre of our calamity. He is flesh of our flesh and bone of our bone, the Son of man in reality because He is the Man of sorrows. At the same time He is the holy and just One, whom the shadow of evil has not affected (*effleuré*). By the simple fact that He came down to earth, He entered a condemned world, which is borne down by the weight of God's chastisements. This condemnation and these chastisements, which since the fall are according to the nature of things, must affect Him at every step. He endures the condemnation which rests on our world according to the express will of God. In this sense, He bears the penalty of our sins and the curse of God. He has thrown Himself into the midst of the battle-field; He has in some sort covered us with His body, and so the chastisement which we deserved has fallen on Him. He placed His innocent head beneath the sword of Divine justice, from the simple fact of His inhabiting a world where suffering and death reign. He who was without sin has been treated as a sinner; He has been made a curse for us; and yet all the while He was the object of the good pleasure of the Father, who did not cease to call Him His well-beloved Son, and who declares that He is in Him reconciling the world unto Himself. It is precisely because He is the only man on earth who, as a representative of our race, endured a punishment which He did not deserve, and did not add a fresh sin to a fresh pain, that His suffering rises to the height of a redeeming

sacrifice. "He became obedient unto death," says the apostle, "even the death of the cross." In other words, from the first step which He took in the career of suffering and condemnation even to the last, at every stage of the long road, in every period of man's sad life, He took upon Himself the condemnation which had come upon a guilty race, He performed an act of obedience, He accepted the will of His Father, He fulfilled it, He displayed the perfection of love (*il a réalisé l'amour parfait*), and in His person reconciled God and man. What is this but saying that He blotted out the transgression of the rebel by His suffering and submission, and that He cancelled the consequences of the first sin? In Him the human race was perfectly united with Divinity, through an absolute acceptance of the will of God as it is manifested in suffering and death, which are the issues of sin. It was at the uttermost bounds of our misery that He went to seek for the remedy and the deliverance; for from the day when this misery was raised to the height of a free sacrifice, it became the very means of reconciliation. By carrying our sorrows, He transformed them; and ever since they have been His sorrows, that is to say the holy sufferings of a love obedient even unto the death of the cross, they have been a source of peace and consolation on earth. His tears are the only dew that has fertilized a world subject to the curse. His death restores life, and His blood atones and purifies! "The chastisement of our peace was upon him, and with his stripes we are healed."

If the redemptive work extended over the whole life and sufferings of the Saviour, there was nevertheless one hour of such moment in the drama of atonement, that Jesus declared that it was for that hour that He had come. Follow us into the solitary and gloomy garden, with its pale olive-trees, now covered with night's darkest veil. Do you see that Man who, amid deep groanings, is calling to heaven? It is the second Adam. He is passing through the decisive trial again granted by a long-suffering and merciful love to our race, which already on the

first occasion had succumbed and fallen. What a contrast between these two trials! In the first days of the world, the trial took place in paradise, beneath a radiant sky and in the midst of the sweetest felicity; in the days of Christ it took place in a desolate and gloomy solitude. What a difference between the first and the second Adam! The one looks up to heaven with a face dulled by no sorrow, with eyes which no tear has ever moistened; the other is prostrate, with His face to the ground; He bathes the dust with a bloody sweat, and His plaint is a stifled sob. The one has only the simplest commandment to obey, in order to retain all his bliss; the other beholds a cup of bitterness brought to His lips, which makes His flesh shudder. The fact is, that the first Adam is still in a world free from sin; whilst the second is in one ravaged by sin. But whilst the one in his most lovely abode ruined everything, both his race and the world, the other, in agony of soul and torture of body, saved all. "Let my will and not Thine be done," said the first Adam; and the paradise became a desert. "Not My will but Thine be done," said the second Adam; and the desert became a paradise, and in Gethsemane the gate of heaven was opened! The condemnation that rests on humanity was accepted and endured by this holy Soul. The word of disobedience was retracted, the source of disunion was destroyed, the heart of man was restored to God, peace was made, and Divine love received its answer. Look also at the difference between the two Adams, as they come forth from the solemn trial. The first fled, confounded and overwhelmed; the second rose from the dust of Gethsemane with a face radiant with such majesty that the murderous band who came to seize Him could not bear its brightness and fell to the ground. On the one side there was pride and ruin, on the other humility and restoration: there, was perdition; here, redemption!

This redemption was completed on the cross. There, on the infamous tree, on which up to that time the most

degraded sons of humanity had been executed, on that tree of which we read, "Cursed is every one who hangeth on it," the atoning sacrifice was consummated. It would not have been enough for the Son of man to have been pierced with all the sorrows of humanity except the last. It would not have been enough for Him to have emptied the cup of all but its last dregs. It would not have been enough for Him to have endured all the consequences of man's rebellion except the last. Death is the wages of sin, and the striking sign of God's condemnation resting on a guilty world. These wages have been received for us by Him who did not deserve them, because He freely made Himself a partaker of our misery in order to save us. "I have power to lay down My life," said He, "and have power to take it again. I am not a condemned criminal, I am the holy and just One, the only begotten Son of the Father. Well, I will not withhold it, I will give it, I will offer it in sacrifice. I will accept this punishment which I have not brought on Myself; but, by accepting it, I will transform it. From the day when I shall convert death into a free sacrifice of love, an act of the highest obedience, I shall destroy its sting, which is sin; I shall destroy it against My breast, against My heart, to the bottom of which it will, in a certain sense, be plunged. My death on the cross will be the last act of My obedience; it will also be the perfect re-establishment of the union between earth and heaven; and this tree, which to My mind recalled the most absolute condemnation, will thenceforth be the glorious sign of reconciliation. The cross will for ever remind humanity that peace has been made between it and its God; for on this bleeding altar its heart was offered, and this great sacrifice was a great act of reconciliation."

Beware of thinking that we restrict the Saviour's redemptive sufferings to His physical death! Death is the king of terrors only because it gathers together in one sheaf, if I may so say, all the consequences of sin, and the band of the sheaf is God's condemnation. Jesus

Christ thus took part in our condemnation; He endured it for us, in our stead. He acknowledged that man deserved it. It was therefore the moral aspect of death which most burdened Him. In the light of Calvary He beheld the yawning abyss of our ruin, and descended into it by the exercise of His compassionate love, and also by undergoing the old sentence passed in Eden. Although He did not cease to be the well-beloved of the Father, He acknowledged the Father's right to punish and forsake us. He fathomed the awful depths of our sin. Where could He have fathomed them more thoroughly than on the cross to which evil in its worst form had nailed Him? for His immolation is the crime of crimes, revealing the frightful enmity of the human soul against its God. Yes, in that hour of darkness the sin of the world weighed on His heart, it crushed Him like a huge millstone. He knew the despair of a guilty world as well as that of hell, through that complete identification with our misery which was the consummation of His mercy. Hence that cry of desolation and of unspeakable sorrow which no theologian will ever be able to explain. The suffering of infinite love is infinite; the Son of God suffers more than a demon, because He can take up into His heart all the sufferings of a world. No martyr ever knew such agony, because none ever loved as He did; in fact, it was through the endurance of the holy and generous suffering to which He was prompted by a self-sacrificing love, truly identified with humanity, that He saved a lost world, and that, as He bowed His innocent head and breathed His last breath, He could say, "It is finished."

Ah, if you have been able to look through the darkness in which Calvary was enshrouded, you will have heard, in that last moment when the Son of man was expiring, all heaven shouting for joy, for lo, "he that was lost is found," and the Exile from Eden is returning to His Father's house. Henceforth, whoso shall adhere by faith to what Jesus Christ has accomplished for him on

the cross shall return with Him to the Father's abode, clad in the royal robe of His righteousness.

Such is the way in which this sovereign consolation of Christ appears to us. It alone corresponds to the gravity of the misfortune, it alone is proportioned to its intensity, it alone reaches the lowest depth of our woes; and it has this glorious characteristic, that it proceeds in a certain sense from the bowels of suffering, but of suffering transformed, sanctified, and raised to the height of a free and loving sacrifice. It is not a consolation which merely dries up a few tears, or scatters a few flowers along our path; no, it attacks the very root of our sufferings. Our Comforter is the Lamb of God who taketh away the sin of the world. In all our distresses therefore, and in all our shipwrecks, there is but one shelter, and that is the cross.

Behold the afflicted multitudes who from age to age ascend with groans the holy mountain: they are the representatives of every human sorrow. As they mount they utter the sad cry, "Son of David, have mercy on me." But when they have prostrated themselves before the holy Victim, and are descending from Calvary, nothing but hosannahs is heard, and a Divine joy beams on the countenances which had been wasted by suffering. Let us join these wailing crowds, let us ascend the holy mount: we shall not be deceived in our expectations; for our sorrows were borne on that great day, and for us also Christ said, "It is finished."

III.

Suffering in its bearing on Conversion.

"My son, be not weary of his correction."—PROV. iii. 11.

I HAVE spoken of our misery and of our hope. We have seen comfort arise even from suffering, since the Redeemer bore our sorrows, and transformed death, which is the sum of them all, into a free sacrifice of love, a holy offering, acceptable to His Father. Suffering, however, has not disappeared from the world since that great immolation, and not one tear less has been shed on earth since it was sprinkled with atoning blood. Eden has not been reopened, and the lamentations of the desolate still rise from our midst, drowning the songs of joy. Why this permanence of suffering? How can we explain the fact that affliction and pardon subsist together? Our text answers the question. "My son," says God to the sufferer, "do not be weary of My correction." In other words, there is nothing in your present affliction to make you despair, not even when it blasts everything around you and bows you down to the dust whither you are so soon to descend. Do not grow weary beneath its most cruel strokes. A great design is being carried out in regard to you. To show the beneficent result of suffering, with reference to the unconverted man, will be the object of this discourse and the best commentary on the text.

Let us first of all acknowledge that suffering is altered in character as soon as we enter into possession of the Divine favour. It is no longer absolute and irremediable; it forms part of the plan of Divine love. It has therefore undergone a radical transformation. An unpardoned world would be like the earth in the days of the deluge, when it

was wholly covered with a black and stormy night, and when the darkness of the sky corresponded to the darkness of the abyss. It is not so now; pardon has caused a brighter light than that of the rainbow to shine amidst the terrible gloom; Divine love irradiates the awful scene. The waters, it is true, still cover our shores, and fold them in a sombre winding-sheet. Affliction moves on like a wave that breaks upon every bank; but then on this sea there falls the rich light of a clear sky. Let us never forget that we no longer inhabit a world subject to the curse; the sentence has been blotted out. It has pleased God to reconcile all things to Himself by the blood of the cross. As long as this cross rises between our world and heaven, it will be the august sign of this reconciliation. On the accursed tree the curse ended, and human history henceforth unfolds itself beneath the eye of a merciful God, who can make all things work together for our everlasting good. This is the predominant and capital fact. A message of peace has been proclaimed; a tender and glorious blessing hovers over our world.

True, suffering has not ceased to bear its character of chastisement. Evil still begets death, and sin has lost nothing of its bitterness; but then chastisement is not the execution of a decree against which there is no appeal. Redeeming love presides over it, as over our whole life; it is present in our sufferings. The hand that strikes is the hand that saves; and instead of the sword which wounds only to kill, I behold the paternal rod. Thus, far from there being any contradiction between pardon and affliction, they both tend to the same end. In my afflictions I find all my pardon, and in the chastisements which descend upon me all the love of the Redeemer.

It is not enough, however, to understand that in a general way affliction forms part of the plan of Divine love; we must seek to know how it helps to realize it.

1. First of all, it acts as a dyke against the overflow of evil, it incessantly restrains and thrusts it back. Imagine a rising ocean tide with no ebb, incessantly advancing, and

covering first the rocks along the shore, then the vallies, then the plains, then the mountains, engulfing fields and towns, urging on its way without a pause, inflexibly pursuing its devastating course till all life had disappeared. This is the picture of what evil would be if left to itself, without suffering to restrain it. Imagine all lusts, all passions, all evil desires, meeting with no obstacle, gradually accumulating hour by hour, and tell me what would become of the moral world. Man would attain to the infinite in evil. But the infinite of evil is destruction and annihilation, and at the foot of the slope of sin is the bottomless pit! But every day this formidable flood of iniquity is held back by an irresistible power; sin finds its limit in suffering; passion strikes against pain as against a fatal bourne, where it perishes; lust is quenched in disgust; however insatiable the thirst for pleasure, the cup of delight always contains bitter and terrible dregs which compel the most eager lips to turn from it; and death is there, to say to the raging waves of our dissolute passions, "Thus far shall ye go, and no farther!" Thus far, namely to that grave-stone against which evil always dashes itself at last! In short, it is a fact that if anything prevents our world from being destroyed by its own corruption, if there is a healthful substance, a purifying salt to stay this putrefaction, it is suffering and death. Yes, however startling the paradox may appear, pain is a restraining and preserving power in this sinful world.

2. But suffering is not a blessing simply because it acts as a restraint; but also, and especially, because it acts as a preparative. It is a bridle, but also a spur urging us towards the cross. Let us call to mind what our redemption is; we shall then understand the important part which affliction plays in the work of salvation. There was found a pure and holy Man, a true representative of our fallen race, because He was the Eternal Word, the only begotten Son, who had formed it in His image. He bore on His innocent head the burden of its condemnation; He entered into perfect fellowship with its suffer-

ings; He was "the Man of sorrows;" and therefore He was the representative of the fallen race. Crowned with thorns, insulted with the grossest outrages, burdened with a cross, the symbol of all that is most terrible in death, He ascended Calvary and expired there. Now it was truly the sin of humanity, its fundamental sin, hatred of God, which drove the nails into His lacerated body. Exhibited as a spectacle to the earth which cursed Him, and to the heaven which veiled itself in darkness, and feeling the suffering of all generations entering into His soul, at the same time raising this suffering to the height of a great sacrifice by acceptance of all the consequences of the fall, not one of which He had deserved, He rendered His death a perfect satisfaction of Divine justice, a glorious atonement, a striking retractation of the rebellion of the first Adam; and so that which seemed to be the curse became the blessing, even salvation. It was thus the heart of man replied to the heart of God. An infinite suffering, an unlimited obedience,—such was the cross. At this cost heaven and earth were reconciled, and salvation was consummated.

But it was in our name that the great work of that hour of atonement was performed, and we can derive benefit from it only as we ratify it. Apart from this, the righteous One died and expiated our faults to no purpose. He only will be saved who unites himself to Christ, not with a view of offering again a sacrifice which was perfect in itself, but in order to make it his own by an earnest acceptance and a living faith. If the imputation of Christ's merits was all external, it would be found that He had obeyed in order to dispense us from obeying. If that had been His object, He need not have left heaven at all. True, we are not shut up to our own merits; we believe most firmly that we could never succeed in weaving a wedding garment such as would allow of our sitting down at our heavenly Father's banquet. We must receive it from the Redeemer's hands, and this robe is His own royal robe, which He has dyed in the crimson of His

own blood. We cannot appear before God except as we are clothed in His righteousness. But He will not clothe us in this until we have approached Him with an ardent desire to receive His grace, and until, like the poor daughter of Israel who met Him one day, we have seized with a trembling hand that holy robe with which we must be covered. In other words, we can only share in His merits through the faith which unites us to Him. What He did for us eighteen hundred years ago is of no value without this faith, this personal adherence to Him.

Now, adhering to His death, what is this but consenting to die with Him? What is adhering to His crucifixion, but becoming one and the same plant with Christ crucified? What is adhering to His cross, but ascending it? Ascending it, I say, and dying there! This does not simply consist in striking one's breast, as the women of Jerusalem did, or in prostrating one's self before the cross like the centurion, or in preaching about it like an apostle; no, it consists in ascending it, and in really renouncing every kind of life that does not proceed from Him, every thought which is opposed to Him, and even our own will; it consists in crucifying the members of the old man with his affections and lusts, and in dying entirely in Him and through Him. Whoever offers salvation on other conditions sadly degrades it, not knowing what is the real union between the heart of man and the heart of God. This is because salvation, free though it is, is nevertheless a noble action, an immense work, and because the crucifixion was followed by the greatest of miracles, and because the Spirit of God Himself has been given to accomplish in us what it was impossible for us to accomplish, I mean to slay us and restore us to life, by uniting us closely to the crucified One and to the risen One. Tell me, you who do not believe in any external imputation, why the day of Pentecost came after the day of Calvary, why such extraordinary help was offered to man for an act so simple, and which would cost so little. I am well aware that God in His goodness sees in each of us the germ of growing

faith, and does not wait until this germ has attained its full development before giving us the benefit of His Son's redemptive sufferings; but still the germ must exist, our crucifixion must have begun, and we must be united in heart to the holy Victim. This can only be through the mighty help of Divine grace. But grace is not celestial magic, it does not free us from the duty of exercising our will: it persuades us to consent to this internal crucifixion, by which the merit of the Divine Sufferer rebounds on us. It employs every means to bring us to this, and of all conceivable means none can be more efficacious than suffering. Hence the important part which it plays in the work of our personal redemption.

Behold at what a distance from this cross all men stand, if we consider their natural dispositions. Behold the attitude of the first spectators of the crucifixion. With the exception of the little group composed of a disciple and three women, among whom I recognise Mary, the mother of my Saviour; with the exception of a poor thief who repents, and a heathen centurion who falls on his knees before Christ,—what do we see? A rude multitude, who regard this punishment as the execution of a deserved sentence, because they believe only in visible honour and success. They can feel nothing but contempt for a *crucified* Saviour, and everything here is repulsive to their carnal mind. There is the formalistic and fanatical Jew, who cannot conceive of the kingdom of God except in a terrestrial form, and the Roman soldier, who has but one kind of worship and belief—material force: what is there here for them? Here is the Pharisee, the scribe, the slave of old and lifeless traditions, and who, in the name of the prophets, condemns Him whom they announced: for him this great suffering is a triumph. Behold the man of reason, the sage, the Sadducee, who believes only in the visible; did you notice him as he passed, wagging his head? Observe, these men are the faithful representatives of their whole generation. In every part of the world you would have found multi-

tudes who felt no attraction towards, or enthusiasm for, anything but glory and power. Everywhere you would have met the Jewish doctor crying out "Blasphemy," "Impiety," as he heard men talk of a God who had humbled Himself. The wise men of Athens, Alexandria, and Rome are just like those of Judæa; and all the philosophers of the day, the worshippers of human reason, would only have felt disdain for a dying Christ. The apostle was not mistaken when he said that the cross was a stumbling-block to the Jew and folly to the Greek. What an immeasurable distance between them all and this cross!

The distance is not less great between it and the men of the present day. Suppose that the real cross, the shameful tree, the gibbet, were set up in our cities, should we not see gathered round it once more the materialistic masses who seek only for the bread which perishes, and who shrink from sacrifice and its symbol? Here again are the lovers of empty forms and of the letter which kills. Have you not seen the wise man of to-day pass by it with the same ironical smile, and the same shaking of the head, as eighteen centuries ago? And yet, in order that men may be saved, they must traverse this infinite distance, they must quit the ranks of the mockers and the profane, and, braving their insults, must prostrate themselves before this instrument of punishment. Yea, further, they must be willing to submit themselves to a moral crucifixion. The Jew must accept what really is a stumbling-block in his way, and the Greek must adore what in his view is foolishness. What can induce these scornful ones to bow the knee and the head before this cross? What can produce in them this immense transformation? The grace of God, we answer, and the grace of God through suffering.

"He that humbleth himself," it is written, "shall be exalted." Humility alone can prepare us to receive pardon and salvation from the hands of Jesus Christ. He did not come, He did not die, for those who are satisfied with

themselves and with their condition; or at least such render what He has done for them utterly valueless. He who believes in himself does not believe in Christ. He who lives under the delusion of his own worth, power, and happiness, wishes neither for a Redeemer nor for a Comforter. He only who has come to know how vain is his happiness, how deceptive his strength, and how poor his worth, longs for grace as the thirsty man longs for the running stream. Penitent and contrite hearts alone are made for the Saviour. If He happens to pass near a man who thinks himself rich in knowledge, merit, and glory, such a man, far from calling Him to him, will reject Him, drive Him away, and speak evil of Him. But if this same man has been brought to see that he is poor, blind, and naked, then, though a thousand obstacles may intervene between him and the Saviour, he will call Him, he will cry to Him, he will throw himself into His arms, he will lay hold of His grace, he will take refuge beneath His cross, and you will not tear him from it again. Do you now see what is the purpose of suffering? It is suffering that will come upon the proud man, that will tear in pieces the wretched garment in which he has wrapped himself, that will rob him of all his tatters, that will extinguish the deceptive glimmer which he regarded as the light, and that will lay him on the road, crushed, wounded, humbled, in one word penitent, so that when the good Samaritan passes by that way he will suffer himself to be raised by Him, and will bless the hand that binds up his wounds.

We shall be told perhaps that the moral suffering which is at the bottom of a heart destitute of God should suffice to draw it to Jesus Christ, and that external sufferings are useless. Far from this being the case, deep feelings often slumber within us; and if at times they manifest their presence for a moment, they may be so easily deadened that they have no power over the soul. Nothing proves more clearly the real and terrible character of our fall than the ease with which man can

forget himself amidst the most ordinary pleasures. He never becomes thoroughly accustomed to them; his original nobleness is seen in the sorrow which suddenly comes over him in the midst of his joy; and his tears tell us that he is the offspring of God. But these tears dry up quickly beneath the sun of prosperity; his melancholy serves as a dissipation, and the secret suffering, which prevents him from being altogether satisfied, does not render him altogether unhappy. Too frequently it happens that he pitches his tent in a flowery land, and exclaims "It is good to be here." Woe to him, if the tree which he has planted continues for a long while to yield abundant shade, freshness, and fruits. His conscience is deadened, his heart grows fat, to use the energetic language of the prophet; he loses the sense of the Divine, and along with the feeling of his wretchedness he loses the feeling of his destiny; he loses both his sadness and his dignity. Certainly, the most terrible of all chastisements which can be inflicted on the impenitent soul is that of being given up to earthly happiness. It seems sometimes as if God treated the ungrateful man, who seeks for nothing but enjoyment, as He treated His people who lusted after the fleshpots of Egypt. He overwhelms with material blessings such as desire no others, and they succumb beneath this mere earthly prosperity, for which they have sold their immortal souls. Some fortunes fill one with alarm. When you see the wicked man prospering, growing like a fine tree that is putting forth its leaves; when you see him loaded with honours, riches, and power, do not be so mean as to envy him. Tremble for him. It was thus that Pharaoh's heart was hardened, and this hardening was simply the fitting punishment for his impenitence. If God had wished to ruin our earth, after sin had entered, He would have left it in all the beauty and splendour of the first day after its creation; if He had wished to transform it into a hell, He would have left it like a paradise, He would have given us up to all the corruption of impure delights and to all the seduc-

tions of unhallowed prosperity. The immortal soul would have rolled on from one degree of degradation to another, till not a spark of Divine life would have been left, and then we should have known what the second death is, of which the first is a very feeble image. The wicked man's unblessed prosperity reminds one of an azure sky during the prevalence of an epidemic; the breeze is pleasant to inhale, but it brings death with it.

God wanted to save us, and this is why He let suffering loose when we had let sin loose. This is why life is hard, and why we eat our bread in the sweat of our face, and find thorns and thistles everywhere. The greatness of our afflictions has been proportioned to the persistent character of our folly. The good and holy God makes an inroad on our life, devastates it, and withers it up in its bloom. He overthrows our tent with the breath of His mouth; He breaks our idols, and smites on the right and on the left all that we hold most precious. Every guilty satisfaction is followed by intolerable suffering; He touches the most sensitive fibres of our being, and preaches repentance to us on the ruins of all that we have loved and pursued. He leads us into the depths of the desert, or rather He creates a solitude around us, that nothing may interfere with our hearing His terrible voice proclaiming, "Thou hast sinned, thou hast sinned." Then conscience awakes; terror lays hold of the guilty man; and, seized with mortal fear, he utters a cry of anguish and feels that he is lost. At this moment God seeks to urge him to the cross, where full atonement has been made, and where everything will be set right.

Thus suffering, under the influence of grace, fills up the infinite distance between man and the cross. Consider what it has wrought in the spectators of the crucifixion, whom we have shown to be indifferent or hostile, and who reappear in every succeeding age. What a commotion has been produced in their ranks! I do not mean to say that the transformation is the same in all. No, suffering of itself does not convert the soul, and

unhappy man still possesses the right to ruin himself. But it has at least broken up to some extent the compact mass of the enemies of Christ, from amongst whom there will come forth in all ages disciples ready to die with and for Him. The man who is now His ardent disciple, and who is ready to follow the Lamb wherever He shall go, to use the touching expression of the martyrs at Lyons, once passed quite carelessly by the cross; he beheld nothing in it but a spectacle, or a merited disgrace, or perhaps a religious symbol, without meaning for him. Whence has this great change arisen? The hand of God has weighed heavily upon him; it has smitten him severely. He was satisfied with himself, he had no higher aspiration; but he staggered beneath the blow that struck him. He awoke as from a dream; his conscience spoke. He remembered his sins, and sought to turn his mind from them; he could not succeed. He looked about him, but found no rest; then he sought it from above. A Divine hand was stretched out towards him, and he laid hold of it. The cross spoke a new language to him; he felt that it had been set up for him; and in spite of the jeers of the bystanders he prostrated himself before the crucified One; he united himself to Him, and that for ever. And you also, learned doctor, scornful philosopher, who lately shook your head at the holy Victim, I have seen you at His feet, shedding tears by the side of the publican and of the sinful woman. The fact is, a day came when you found yourself grappling with some sinister reality of life. You could no longer discuss or laugh with your disciples; you wanted to be sustained, strengthened, comforted, and you found nothing for your agonized heart in the forms of a traditional religion, or in the ingenious arguments of human reasoning; and then beneath the actor who plays his part there awoke the man, the man saddened, humbled, and as feeble as the most ignorant and the most despised; like Bartimeus, you flung away your cloak, and said in your turn, "Son of David, have mercy upon me, for I perish."

Thus from age to age recruits are added to this saddened and comforted band, who are determined to know nothing but Jesus Christ crucified. Through the direct action of grace, suffering had prepared the way for Christ in the old world by attacking not merely the individual, but also the lost race of man whom it had mercilessly and unceasingly pursued from religion to religion, from illusion to illusion; and it was through a wasted world, reduced to the condition of a desert, that the road was made which was to lead to Him. The history of the old world ended with a humbling defeat, and the vanquished adherents of paganism were the firstfruits of Christianity. It was out of Jewry, when humbled and captive and groaning beneath the yoke of the foreigner, it was from despised Galilee, that the apostles and first disciples went forth.

Ever since the Redeemer came amongst men, and called to them from His cross, suffering has been His great prophet and forerunner, but suffering modified, mingled with blessing, as befits a pardoned world, but yet traversing the earth with the axe of John the Baptist. The angel of the Apocalypse, flying in the midst of heaven with the message of the Divine word, holds in one hand the gospel and in the other a sword.

What is it that stays for awhile the turmoil of worldly life? What is it that introduces a serious thought into the house of pleasure? What is it that, amidst the calculations of ambition and the course of business, excites a higher thought, a nobler aspiration? What is it that troubles the satisfied conscience? What is the dart which pierces the proud or frivolous man as he pursues his way along the path of life? Is it not pain, or rather is it not God present in pain, and visiting us through it, and by this breach entering the heart He desires to save? Such is the answer to the question we asked at the beginning of this discourse. It was the suffering of a God who humbled Himself that saved us, and it is suffering dispensed by this same God which prepares the

sinner to believe in the crucified One. Suffering constitutes the first element in the great atonement of Calvary. Suffering also makes us seize the salvation thus wrought for us, but which must be consummated in us. It must therefore pursue its work on this redeemed earth, where sin still dwells; and we must recognise even in its most distressing manifestations the infinite love which seeks to save our souls at all costs.

And now you can see what blessing and comfort our text yields to the afflicted. "My son, be not weary of God's correction." I could understand the afflicted man becoming weary if he knew not whence his suffering comes, if he were compelled to regard it as an inexorable law or an unhappy chance, if he felt himself grappling with an impersonal power, crushing everything in its passage without any concern. I could understand his growing weary if he were obliged to see in suffering a curse, the execution of a rigorous sentence. But why grow weary when it is God who chastens us, and when He chastens us only in order to save us? No; let there be no despair, no irritation. Afflicted one, a great design, the greatest of all designs, is being carried out in regard to yourself. You thought neither of God nor of your soul; you went where your heart led you, and your heart was leading you to perdition. You had not one serious thought; you lived in time and for time. Jesus Christ was near you, and you did not suspect it; and yet your life was passing away, ever passing away; and soon the solemn probation would have ended: when lo! God stopped you. He put His hand on your heart, and you found it heavy; but He only did it to dispel your illusion, and to lead you to throw yourself humbled and penitent at the feet of your Saviour, who had so long been waiting for you.

Oh, do not complain! Do not say that this affliction is useless. You could not have shaken off your chains; it was necessary that they should be broken, and rudely broken. Indeed, you had no idea that there was any

higher end to be pursued on earth than to seek enjoyment and riches, and to win glory. A nobler world appeared to you; something hitherto unknown and Divine awoke within you; you sighed for a deliverance, the want of which you had never felt before. You remembered that there is a God, a Saviour; and a new light shone on the pages of the gospel which you had not read since you spelt it out in your infancy. Therefore do not grow weary. It is God who is rebuking you and addressing to you His most searching and solemn appeals. It is the great crisis of your moral life. Behold, you are overwhelmed by the force of the blow that has struck you, and you lie prostrate near the cross. Will you rise full of useless pride? or will you not rather understand that there is now only one course to be taken, and that is to become a Christian, and to die to yourself that you may live with your Saviour? Oh, listen, listen to this Divine rebuke! "Hear the rod, and him who hath appointed it." Do not allow yourself to be simply stunned by the force of the blow; listen to what God says to you as He smites you. Let your sufferings remind you of your sins. Do not grow weary even amid such distressing thoughts; a perfectly free and most generous pardon is offered you; comfort flows in abundance from the holy wounds of Christ. Let him that is athirst come and drink. Let not this blessed, this hallowed time of affliction pass away. Have nothing to do with the evil and profane consolations the world offers you. This is the day of the Lord; for this day and for this hour you came. This is the decisive meeting between you and your God, who has visited your abode. Remember that affliction may be useless as well as profitable, and that nothing is more distressing, more likely to produce despair than suffering which has passed in vain over a family or a soul. Ah, if you would but respond, in this your day, to the calls of Divine mercy! Do not grow weary now that the God of love is rebuking you. Say to yourself that if you refuse to listen to Him, if you reject Him when He

speaks to you with such power, you will not only find yourself a prey to bitter remorse, but also subjected to the hopeless and awful suffering which accompanies condemnation. What is hell but profitless suffering? You are not made for hell any more than other creatures. Heaven is reserved for you, but on the condition of your humbling yourself to the earth and entering by the low and narrow gate which alone leads to it, and of your allowing yourself to be persuaded by your sufferings to be united in heart with the only suffering that is accepted of God,—that of the holy and just One on the accursed tree. "My son, be not weary of his correction."

On Calvary, near the Redeemer's cross, I see two other crosses. On one an impenitent man dies blaspheming; on the other dies a man with blessings on his lips, but whose limbs were equally lacerated by the nails. This is the picture of humanity divided into its two great sections. In the midst, set up between heaven and earth, is the cross of the Saviour of the world, rising as the sign of salvation offered to all. Not one among the sons of men is free from the affliction that has come upon the whole race, and it may be said without exaggeration that they are all nailed to a painful cross. It is not for them to choose between happiness and suffering, between an agreeable life and a cross. They are all born nailed like culprits to a cross; only it remains to be seen on which of the two crosses they will place themselves, for they are free to choose. Either they will choose the accursed cross, whence outrages are uttered against the Divine sufferer, and then their present sufferings will only be a prelude to the terrible sufferings of the life to come; or they will choose the cross whence blessing proceeds, the cross from which prayer is addressed to Christ; and then, from the fatal and inevitable crucifixion resulting from the natural condition of man, they will rise to the voluntary and holy crucifixion which unites us with Christ, which plants us together with Him in His death, and they will hear these words from His lips, "This day

shalt thou be with me in paradise." Even here below they will be in this paradise; for to suffer with Christ, being pardoned and blessed by Him, is already heaven, and Christian affliction, as we shall show in our next discourse, thus becomes the source of perfect joy. *Our* choice indeed is made; and since we must suffer and be crucified here below, we are willing to suffer with Him in order that by-and-by we may reign with Him, and so be for ever in His presence.

IV.

Suffering in relation to the Christian Life.

"God chastens us for our profit, that we may be partakers of his holiness."—HEB. xii. 10.

IN a forgiven world suffering cannot be a curse, it must form part of the plan of redemption, and contribute to its realization; such was the predominant idea of our last discourse. We attempted to show that the suffering which the unconverted man is called to endure becomes in the hand of God an irresistible goad urging him toward the cross; we brought before you the sweet and noble word, addressed to all who have sought comfort but to no purpose, "My son, be not weary of his correction." We have now to consider the subject under another aspect.

With broken pride the sinner has gone weeping to the Redeemer's feet, and poured forth his heart; at the sound of the blessed words, "Go in peace, thy sins are forgiven thee," he has risen. Here he is then arrived at the goal. May we not expect that henceforth he will be free from sorrow, and that unmingled happiness will be the natural pledge of his reconciliation? The poor criminal who looked with a penitent and loving heart to the Saviour received this promise, "To-day shalt thou be with me in paradise." Where is this paradise of pardoned sinners? In what part of the world have its ever-blooming trees been replanted? Where does its cloudless sky always shine? Where is the asylum which death does not enter? It is not to be found; and we all know that the external conditions of existence have undergone no change for the Christian. Of this he has no right to complain; he was not taken by surprise.

Jesus Christ did not leave him under any delusion: He declared that the servant would not meet with better treatment than the Master; He said to His disciples, "You will have trouble and anguish in the world." If we look at the condition of His apostles, we find that according to the world's idea of things it was a very miserable one; shelterless, poor, and despised, they traversed the earth of which they were regarded as the offscouring, only to meet with fresh sufferings wherever they went. Judging only by appearance, these men were to be pitied; if they were privileged, it was in the number and extent of their afflictions. But why go back eighteen centuries, in order to be convinced of this fact? I have seen my brother in the faith, him who is to share the incorruptible inheritance with me, earning a precarious subsistence by the sweat of his brow, and experiencing all the bitterness of poverty. I have seen the Christian mother weeping by the side of an empty cradle. I have seen God's family on earth incessantly smitten, sifted by affliction like wheat.

Do not be astonished at this: not one of us has yet reached the goal; for pardon is not the goal, but only the starting-point. The end is holiness, and such holiness! no less than that of God Himself. The way to it starts from the foot of the cross,—a narrow way, calling for humiliation and self-sacrifice. As we proceed, groans are intermingled with expressions of gratitude, and we are in constant need of being stimulated by affliction. Let us now inquire how it fulfils this important office on behalf of Christians. We know beforehand that it cannot but tend to the realization of a merciful design. If it was a source of blessing even for the unconverted man, what will it not be for him who has become a partaker of grace? This assurance of itself affords great comfort; but we must ascertain more precisely the nature of the blessing which the Christian obtains through suffering. It must be very considerable, since St. James went so far as to say that we must

count it all joy when we fall into divers temptations.* If I can only justify the use of such strange but noble language, my object will be attained.

In Divine revelation an admirable progress of thought is observable, rising gradually from the lower to the higher stages. This striking progress is observable in regard to each particular truth, as well as in regard to truth in general. Thus, the secret of affliction was not entirely revealed in the first ages of the world; it was made known to man little by little, and it is only by the precious light of the gospel that the path of the unfortunate has been fully illumined, and it is only since the proclamation of pardon that we have heard the last word of the sad enigma. Three periods may be distinguished in what I may call the moral history of suffering amongst the people of God. Each has brought out most clearly some important truth, which has not been set aside but rather completed by a higher truth, proceeding from a new revelation. Thus it will be deeply interesting to make a rapid examination of this moral history of suffering, taking care not to omit any of the successive lessons which God has given to His children in the course of His revelations.

1. Suffering was presented to man, first of all, as the direct punishment of the sins he had committed. There could be no more efficacious way of awakening his conscience. God treated him like a child. In fact, during this first age of the world humanity was really in its moral infancy; it could not rise up to the world of mind; it was necessary that that world should descend to it, and that every truth should become a matter of feeling and experience. Man found it difficult to look within; the inner book did not lie open before him; external objects alone could speak a language sufficiently plain for him to understand. Doubtless, he would not have grasped the truth, even in this palpable form, if there had not been a secret but real correspondence

* The French translation gives *afflictions*.

between it and his soul; yet he could not dispense with the practical teaching of the Divine dispensations. A long time before the first leaf of Scripture was written, revelation had begun in history; it was being written not in words but in facts, simple and striking facts. Thus in order to make the connection between sin and pain quite clear, God had established a striking correspondence between evil and suffering, between right action and prosperity. The man who acts righteously is the man who has most flocks, most riches, most happiness. The patriarch sees his servants' tents extending far across the plain. All that he does prospers; rivers of oil pour out from the rock; he multiplies his days as the sand; his roots spread out by the waters, and the dew lies all night on his branch; his righteousness is like a robe and a diadem, it shines amidst his outward prosperity (Job xxix.). On the other hand, the wicked travaileth with pain every day; a small number of years is reserved for the violent man; a dreadful sound is in his ears; in the midst of peace he thinks that the destroyer is coming upon him; trouble and anguish make him afraid, they assail him. Because he stretcheth out his hand against the Almighty, God runneth upon him and seizeth him in the thick bosses of his shield. He shall dwell in desolate cities, and in houses which no man inhabiteth and which are ready to become heaps. He does not become rich, and his substance does not increase, and what he wished to complete will not be prolonged on earth. He perishes before his days are fulfilled; his branch does not become green (Job xv.). The first Psalm brings out with great distinctness this correspondence between righteousness and earthly happiness.

The history of the people of Israel was a magnificent realization of Divine justice under the old economy. Every time they lapsed into idolatry they were immediately and severely chastised; and at length this noble tree, planted by the running waters of the happy Judæan land, was transplanted to the rivers of exile. Every

return to God, every act of repentance, was at once rewarded; and we may assert in general terms that the old economy held the balance firm between right action and prosperity, between sin and suffering. The farther back we go towards the first ages of the world, the more is Divine justice seen to be attended with this earthly and temporal sanction. The farther we go from them, the more do we feel that a high end is to be subserved by suffering. Every time therefore that the man of God was smitten in those early days, he was led to think that he had committed some great sin; his suffering was a source of deep humiliation, he clothed himself in sackcloth and ashes, he cast dust on his head and cried to heaven, because he felt that he was guilty as well as miserable. Later on, he had to learn that affliction does not confine its attacks to exceptional sinners, and that prosperity does not fall only to the share of the righteous; but if the truth revealed to him was incomplete, it was nevertheless one of great importance.

2. But it was not possible that man should always remain content with the most elementary principles in regard to the explanation of suffering. Facts were daily occurring in apparent contradiction to this distributive justice, according to which piety and uprightness should always be rewarded with favour and the wicked man rigorously punished. Oftentimes it was not the just, but rather the wicked man, who appeared to prosper in all his ways: the former was insulted, despised, and poverty-stricken; the latter haughtily displayed his wealth. Long before Jesus Christ came, poor Lazarus had been noticed at the door of wicked Dives, without a rag to cover his sores. The first time that happiness was thus seen severed from righteousness there was a profound shaking among pious souls, a terrible perplexity seized them, and their conscience trembled as if God Himself were about to fail them. It was then they exclaimed that the foundations were overthrown: "My feet were almost gone," said Asaph, "my steps had well-nigh slipped" (Ps. lxxiii. 2).

There is a book in Scripture which depicts in fiery colours this moral crisis, so full of inward peril and distress: I mean the book of Job, one of the most precious of books, because it gives us an insight into the awful struggles of a human heart, and because it sends up to heaven the deepest groans which earth ever heard before the sobs of Calvary were uttered. The book is moistened with the bitterest tears which a human creature can shed —those of a wounded conscience. What are the wounds of the heart, compared with those of the conscience? What pain can compare with that arising from the feeling, or rather the mistaken notion, of injustice in God? This is the feeling that constitutes all the pathos of the incomparable drama which transpires in the depths of a righteous man's heart, of the tragedy whose theatre is the lowest depths of an immortal soul. The question is not whether Job will be re-established in his prosperity, but whether he will find or lose his God, the just and holy God. It is the fear of not being able to believe any longer in His holiness, which darkens his soul with the shadow of death. If he roars like a wounded lion, if he curses the day of his birth, if he can discover no rest but in the dust of the tomb, if he declares that he would be delighted to come at length to the grave, if he asks the light why it shines on the wretched, and if he prays to God, all whose arrows have pierced him, to put an end to him, it is not because his flocks have fallen a prey to the Arab despoiler, or because his sons and daughters have been buried beneath the ruins of their house, which the desert wind has overthrown; it is not because he is eaten up by a frightful disease: no, it is because he doubts the justice of God. This is what so increases his torments, and brings him to utter despair. And if he doubts his God, it is because, together with the whole of patriarchal humanity, he has all along believed that great misfortunes are inflicted here below for the punishment of great sins, and that exceptional disasters are signs of extraordinary crimes. From his

earliest childhood he had been brought up with this notion, and his prosperity at the outset had tended to confirm it. And yet the most horrible calamities have come upon him one after another, without his having forsaken the good old ways. In vain he questions himself and examines his life; he cannot discover the exceptional sin which, according to his notion, should justify such terrible disasters; he would be almost glad to find it, because it seems to him that he would at the same time find his God once more. He knows that he is a sinful man, he confesses it; and perhaps, if the contradiction did not exasperate him, he would be ready to acknowledge in the guilt which he shares, in common with all the rest of men, a sufficient reason for his misfortune: but his friends are at his side, turning the knife about in the wound, wearying him with their sententious speeches and their cold reasonings, declaring one after another that Job must have committed some unheard-of sin, which he has hypocritically concealed, and by which alone the excessive character of his calamity can be explained. "Can the flag," they say to him, "grow without water? will it not wither before any herb? So are the paths of all that forget God, and the hypocrite's hope shall perish" (Job viii. 11, 13). It is the old notion of suffering, harshly thrust in the face of an afflicted man, who, with the exception of the general corruption of his race, knows that he is innocent.

Job feels that he is not a hypocrite; his conscience bears him witness that he has been a faithful servant of the Lord, and that, looking at the matter as one of strict justice, the hand of God ought not to weigh so heavily on him. Hence a rising of indignation, a rebellion not of the will but of the conscience, a conflict of feelings which excites a tempest within him. Hence his ardent defence of himself against the Almighty; hence the audacity with which as a frail being he relies on his consciousness of right, at least as he has understood it up to that time; and in a sense he sets God against God. We must not

search in the book of Job for the development of a theory about suffering; we must not ask him for the logic which never allows the thread of an argument to snap in its cold hand. No; we have in these pages something more than a book, we have a soul pouring itself forth in burning words; we meet with thoughts and emotions which follow one another with inconceivable rapidity; prayer comes after an almost blasphemous speech; confidence in God and hope surmount the bitter floods of despair; love is mingled with indignation: but nevertheless the most striking feature of the book is the passionate interrogation which Job addresses to heaven, "O Thou who knowest that I am not an impious man, canst Thou take delight in crushing me?" If the veil hiding from our view the invisible world had been removed for a moment, if Job could have known that he was the champion of the Divine cause, if he could have seen his calamity from the height of heaven instead of looking at it from the level of earth and from amidst the ashes where he lay, resignation would have been an easy matter. What if, transported into the covenant of grace, he had learnt beforehand all that the people of God were afterwards to know respecting the end of affliction! But this veil was not to be raised, he was not to know the solution of the problem, and yet he was compelled to submit; he was obliged to be satisfied with seeing that he was a sinner, and that every sinner deserves the wrath of the Lord. In presence of the High and Holy One, he was compelled to adore and be silent, though he could not understand the matter. "Where wast thou when I laid the foundations of the earth?" said the Lord from out of the whirlwind. "Declare, if thou hast understanding. Have the gates of death been opened unto thee, or hast thou seen the doors of the shadow of death? Knowest thou the ordinances of heaven? canst thou set the dominion thereof in the earth? Shall he that contendeth with the Almighty instruct him? he that reproveth God, let him answer it." Then Job, humbled, answered the Lord

and said, "Behold, I am vile; what shall I answer thee? I will lay my hand on my mouth." Admirable ending of this inspired book, and this moral drama, the various movements (*péripéties*) of which are so affecting.

A noble lesson for all time! Although, as we shall see directly, we as Christians possess the full solution of the general problem of suffering, yet we frequently find ourselves in the position of Job, in regard to this or that particular affliction. There are sorrows so far-reaching, so universal; there are losses so absolute, and blows so terrible and inexplicable, that it seems for a time as if we were wrapped in thickest gloom, and as if the secret of the Lord had not been revealed. Why was this man stricken, and that man spared? Why was such and such a being, in whom so many hopes centre, or who had already realized so many pleasant expectations, why was he withdrawn? Why was that other person left, an useless encumbrance to earth? Why was that voice, which found an echo in so many hearts, suddenly silenced? Why have I been smitten? Why have I lost that which rendered my moral life beautiful and useful? Oftentimes the soul seems lost for a while in thoughts which overwhelm it, it loses its foothold, it tumbles about helplessly amid the deep waters of affliction. It seems as if all were over. Do not believe it. Remember Job; you cannot go to greater lengths of despair than he, and yet God had pity on him. There is much comfort for you in this example of indescribable suffering, exasperated to the highest degree, and yet pardoned and consoled. Cling to the memory of this blessed fact as to a cable of deliverance, a board or a plank amid the shipwreck. And then remember that affliction forms part of God's plan, and that He also asks you to manifest ready and absolute confidence in Him.

3. Let us now ascend to the higher stages of revelation, to those solitary heights where henceforth the believer beholds the dawn of day, to the cross, whither all things conspire to lead us. It is there that suffering

utters its last word. First of all, in order to assure us that pain is not necessarily a proof of sin, it is enough that He who is emphatically the Righteous One should have suffered. I know that He suffered for us, and that He bore our sins on the tree by submitting to their consequences; but it is none the less certain that He Himself remained free from all pollution, that evil found nothing in Him, and that the extreme anguish of His crucifixion was coincident with the highest manifestation of holiness. Already the prophecy of the Old Testament—that anticipation of the gospel—had depicted the ideal Servant of God, the redeeming Messiah, with suffering features; and thus the iron circle in which Job was shut up by his friends had been broken. The crucifixion of the Holy and the Just One taught the world that perfect holiness has no other asylum on earth than the accursed tree. But the Saviour's crucifixion is not simply the revelation of the highest truths; it is a redemption, the redemption of our transgressions, the cancelling of our debt through the sacrifice of Him who was emphatically the Righteous One. He who believes in Him is no longer exposed to be condemned by the justice to which no satisfaction has been offered; suffering in his case is essentially a means of grace, and it assumes the beautiful name of trial, thus summing up all its blessings. It strengthens Christian virtue by calling it into exercise; it reveals the depth of the soul; it glorifies the Divine Saviour by making known the power of His consolation; it gives to faith and love the most favourable opportunities of displaying their power; and, to use the words of our text, it makes us partakers of the Divine holiness. It is a burning furnace, which is never kindled but for the purifying of gold and to rid it of all dross. To employ Vinet's illustration, it is in the hands of the Divine Sculptor the merciless but beneficent chisel, which, from out of the block of still shapeless marble, will draw forth His own image, to live again in a creature that has for too long a time been degraded.

Sanctification is simply conversion continued and confirmed. If conversion consists, as we have said, in uniting ourselves with heart and will, and with our whole being, to the Divine Sufferer, sanctification will consist in uniting ourselves to Him on the cross in an increasingly intimate manner. It is a long and painful labour, which has to be incessantly recommenced; in our moral life, which is so fluctuating and fickle, nothing can be accomplished suddenly and once for all; the action of to-day does not render the action of to-morrow unnecessary, and the less so that union with the Saviour is continually hindered by the life of the world, by its numberless temptations, and by the spontaneous opposition of our own heart. If therefore I were left to myself, I should soon be tired of those painful struggles, and should go back to the present world, assuredly bearing in my heart the aching pang which the young man experienced who refused the Master's call,—the world having made me incapable of loving the cross, and the cross of loving the world to which I should have sold myself,—awful condition, into which we should all fall but for the help of God. At all costs, we must be kept close to the redeeming and sanctifying cross: the afflictions which God ordains are the means of attaching us to it in some measure.

4. Let us now very briefly consider how by means of trials we are more and more planted with Christ in His crucifixion. First of all, they wean us from inferior things. "The love of the world is enmity against God" (English translation, "The carnal mind is," etc.); this refers not only to the evil worldly life, with its impure lusts, but also to the immoderate and idolatrous love of the creature. Nothing more completely separates us from God, and nothing is more natural. The apostle who concluded a letter containing the highest teachings of revelation with these words, "My little children, keep yourselves from idols," was well acquainted with human nature and with the Christian's heart. Although in possession of the

highest good and of goodness itself, or rather of the principle of goodness, through Jesus Christ, we are continually allowing the world, its glory and its affections, to regain its hold upon us. It works in each of us with its whirlwind of lust and passion; and we should carry it with us if we went to a Port Royal lying amidst the fields, or into a bare and sandy desert. We are constantly making gods to go before us, visible divinities which divide our heart. Such a divinity may be seen in the being whom we love immoderately. It is perhaps an innocent child: on its fair ringlets we have hung all our hopes, all our affections; it is really our god, more so than the God of heaven. Earth appears to us so golden when lighted up with its smile; our country is forgotten for that frail being. And you are astonished that that flower, which perfumed all around you and made you forgetful of the real Eden, should be taken from you, and transplanted to the garden of the Lord! By-and-by you will bless the hand that has snatched it away, apparently in so cruel a manner, but in reality with such tenderness. And though your affection was not stained with idolatry, you had other idols; you were becoming acclimatized in your place of exile. But since your tent was overturned, you have felt as you never did before that you are not made for earth; you have aspired after your country; you have felt drawn to Christ, from whom an ungrateful happiness had separated you; and you have heard a loud and solemn voice saying, "Let your affections mount upwards!"

In sending affliction and sanctifying it by His grace, God did not deem it enough to distress your soul and to tear it away from the visible world; He has closely united it to Jesus Christ and to the upper world. In your losses you have seen nothing but Him, and if ever you have tasted that the Lord is precious it has been since the day when you were thus smitten. He came to you amid the ruins of your earthly happiness, and spoke with His penetrating voice; He put His hand on your heart, He offered you Divine consolation, and then you

said, like John the Baptist, "Verily, I knew him not." Between Him and you there transpired something entirely new. You wept on His bosom, and the tears thus shed were sweet. You understood His work, and especially His love, better. His words assumed a deeper meaning for your mind. And now you know what you possess in Him, what treasures of strength and peace He was laying up for you; His Spirit, who comforted you in your weakness, has enkindled within you a holy and burning love which the waves of the sea could not extinguish; and it seems to you as if the Divine Spouse said to your soul, "I will lead thee into the wilderness, and speak to thee according to thy heart." This wilderness was affliction; and lo, beneath His look it blossomed as the rose. Such happiness is holy, for holiness dwells in Him, and He is now everything in your estimation.

5. Lastly, affliction is transformed by the Christian into a noble act of obedience, and an occasion of thoroughly accepting the will of God. In this way especially it makes us partakers of His holiness. Apart from obedience, there are no holy actions; and when we have placed before you that which is really the holy act, the one which saved you, we have transported you, not to the mountain where Jesus speaks to an immense multitude, or to the tomb of Lazarus where He performs an astounding miracle, but to the garden of Olives, where the Son of man is heard exclaiming with tears, as the bitter cup was put to His lips, "Father, not my will, but thine be done." Not only is the acceptance of the Divine will in such conditions THE holy act, but also the highest manifestation of love, its most real expression because it is the most costly; in short, it is the most perfect realization of the union between man and God, the agreement of wills being the closest and most essential bond between free and personal beings. We have not hesitated therefore to say that it is the act of absolute obedience, accomplished by the second Adam, while enduring infinite suffering in Gethsemane and on Calvary,

and thus destroying the rebellion of our first father. The more that from our heart we can say to God, "Let Thy will be done, and not ours," the more perfect will be our agreement with the glorious Head of redeemed humanity, and the more shall we partake of His holiness. Now I ask you when can this act of obedience be more really fulfilled than in the day of affliction? Is it not then that we are obliged to acknowledge that God's thoughts are not our thoughts, and that His will is often contrary to ours? Our natural desire is to be preserved and guaranteed from suffering; in presence of a great trial our flesh shudders, our heart is torn, we feel ourselves grappling with a terrible principle of contradiction. If at such a time we say from the depth of our heart, "Let Thy will be done on earth as in heaven," we utter an earnest word, we give an irrefutable proof of obedience, and we are united to our Saviour by the strongest of bonds. This is the most glorious triumph of grace over nature, the noblest victory of the old man over the new, the complete re-establishment of order within, for it is in fact the re-establishment of the sovereignty of God. We can do nothing more pleasing to Him, and nothing which will more advance His glory.

Looking at matters from this point of view, great deeds are not wrought on the stage of public life, in the world, and in the Church; they are wrought in the solitude of humiliation; they are not brilliant deeds, but rather silent, hidden deeds, which, performed beneath the eye of God, are accompanied with many tears and groans. Nothing can equal in worth the acceptance of a cruel, overwhelming dispensation, the offering of a heart crushed beneath the grip of suffering, the sacrifice of a wounded soul which has only just strength enough to say, "Not what I will, but what Thou wilt!" When the day of painful obedience dawned, even though it dawned on the most terrible disaster, it was a day of peculiar grandeur and beauty; we were raised to the very summit of moral life, a rugged, thunder-blasted

summit, like the Alpine peaks, but still piercing the clouds. Then, assimilated to the Divine Victim, we receive from His hands the bitter cup, the dregs of which He drank, and which, as presented by Him, is not a deadly cup; then it is that, after Him and through Him, and repeating without any reservation the word of submission, we are truly incorporated in the renewed humanity of which He is the type and representative. Afflicted Christians, when you pass through your Gethsemane, do not think solely of its desolation, but also of all its Divine beauty since the Redeemer traversed it, and be sure that it is this gloomy garden of Olives which is nearest to the goal. It is there that the narrow gate is opened, through which the self-despoiled and the self-crucified pass, kings and priests unto the Lord, who have found in the tears of affliction borne with patience an anointing more holy than Aaron's. God chastises us for our profit, that He may make us partakers of His holiness.

We have shown what Christian suffering should produce; we ought now to show you what it has in reality produced, and thus by its deeds prove its blessed and fructifying power. Space fails me, and I therefore appeal to your recollections. The baptism of fire never descended upon the Church until after the baptism of tears. Great trials have always preceded great reformations. This is true of religious society in general, and of every individual composing it. Is it not certain that, if you are worth anything as Christians, you owe it to the grace of God working through affliction? Your various stages of progress along the path of holiness are marked by crosses. Supposing you have been spared yourselves, you have at least been witnesses of your brethren's terrible trials, and you have been able to observe what glorious harvests have followed tearful seed-times.

Have you not been filled with a feeling of holy respect, as you have met with some sorely tried Christian, who was able to suffer without a murmur and with holy gentleness? Have you not had the impression that his

soul was being purified and transfigured? Something heavenly beamed on his pale features; you almost seemed conscious of the approach of God, and of the perfume of Christ's presence. The purified gold shone with a lustre unknown before; the burning coal had touched his lips, and you would have said that an offering of a sweet savour was being consumed on the altar. Such is trial, as God desires it to be. Do not be astonished therefore, if you also are called to pass through a furnace, and if you are overwhelmed with divers afflictions. "Our light affliction, which is but for a moment, worketh for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory." Those effects will not be produced without your help. Suffering has no magical virtue. It is possible even to derive from it nothing but hatred and sin. Take heed, therefore, that that which is lame be not turned out of the way, but rather let it be healed. Every affliction which does not lead to holiness and love is an evil thing.

Oh, beware! it is not your soul's well-being alone which is concerned, but also the glory of God; for if nothing brings Him so much honour as suffering borne with Christian meekness, nothing discredits Jesus Christ so much in the eyes of the world as the murmuring and rebellious spirit of one of His disciples in the day of affliction. You remember the strange scene with which the noble book of Job opens. Satan, the calumniator and adversary of God, presents himself before the throne, and insinuates that the piety of Job, who is the true type of the just man under the olden economy, is nothing but a selfish calculation. "Does Job fear thee for nought?" says he; "put forth thine hand now, and touch all that he hath, and he will curse thee to thy face." Thus in Job's affliction the Divine honour is at stake; and by the way in which he will endure it it will be seen if the Most High has mercenaries or disinterested worshippers as His servants, if He receives a servile or a loving homage. The same scene is still being transacted.

I seem to see the unbelieving world presenting themselves before the throne where our Redeemer is seated, and saying ironically, "Do Thy disciples serve Thee for nought? Hast Thou not surrounded them with good things? Stretch out now Thine hand, and it will be seen if they love Thee for Thine own sake, or for the sake of Thy blessings." All this amounts to saying, "Stretch out now Thine hand, and it will be seen if Thou art worthy to inspire any heart with love." It is for you, Christians, to answer this question; it is for you, my afflicted brethren, to show whether you love Christ only in the day of prosperity, or whether, loving Him for His own sake, you bless Him even amidst privations and beneath the cross. In this suit instituted against God you will witness against Him, if you are seen despairing and irritated, with bitterness in your heart and murmuring on your lips. Then men will mock at the gospel and its promises; the laugh of the great adversary will be heard, and the world will say that Jesus Christ can neither comfort, nor save, nor make Himself beloved. Belie such ironical accusations; show by your holy resignation, by your joy amidst tears, by your perfect submission, show that they have lied who have said that our beloved Saviour is necessitated to buy our hearts, and that His own attractions do not suffice. Strengthen yourselves with the thought that the glory of Christ is in your hands, and by the way in which you suffer compel the impious and frivolous world to stand astonished, and to acknowledge, in spite of itself and to the glory of the Redeemer, that the gospel is the power of God to save and to console.

V.

Suffering for the Truth's sake.

"Blessed are they who are persecuted for righteousness' sake; for their's is the kingdom of heaven. Blessed are ye, when men shall revile you, and persecute you, and shall say all manner of evil against you falsely, for my sake. Rejoice, and be exceeding glad: for great is your reward in heaven: for so persecuted they the prophets who were before you."—MATT. v. 10–12.

WE have considered the effect of suffering on the Christian life. We have seen it to be one of the most powerful means of making us partakers of the Divine holiness, for nothing can equal a severe affliction in fixing and nailing us to the cross of Christ, where we must die to ourselves before we can live His life. We now know why we are called to suffer so much, and why trials are so frequently sent. But, connected with our Christian calling, are other afflictions by which we fill up the holy sufferings of the Saviour. It was in a twofold capacity, as the august and perfect Representative of *truth* and of *love*, that He suffered. He was, first of all, the great Martyr for truth, allowing all the hatred and contempt which it excites in a hostile world to culminate on His head. In the second place, His loving heart assimilated all the sufferings of humanity, and His tender pity felt them all. No one can be a perfect Christian without experiencing both these noble kinds of suffering, martyrdom and compassion. They are the completion and the crown of holiness. They have this peculiarity; they do not come from without, as common accidents from which we cannot escape. No, they are decidedly free and moral; we are at liberty to withdraw from them. We have only to put a seal on our lips, and to be silent about our convictions; the world will then be all smiles. If we will only close our hearts against com-

passion, and be content with our own happiness, a chilling indifference will then be our shameful privilege. Suffering for truth and love's sake is therefore a pre-eminently free act, with no passive element in it. Hence these holy sufferings bring with them their own consolation, and are mingled with heavenly joy. I am going to try and convince you of this, with regard to the first kind of suffering, that which results from a bold confession of the gospel, by expounding the noble saying of the Master, "Blessed are they who are persecuted for righteousness' sake."

I. The first lesson taught us by the text is, that we *cannot be servants of the truth and of righteousness*—in other words, we cannot be servants of Jesus—*without suffering*. This cannot fail to astonish us when we call to mind the preceding declarations. This ending of the beatitudes looks like a paradox. How does it come to pass that men of broken heart, full of meekness and forbearance, can provoke the enmity of their fellows? If they were haughty rich men, against whom "the hire of the labourers who have reaped their fields, and which is kept back by fraud, crieth" (Jas. v. 4), if they were haughty and proud men, full of their own merit and glory, who contemptuously oppress the weak, we could understand the hatred of which they are the objects. But no, they are poor in spirit, and confess their nothingness in the sight of God. If they were self-satisfied Pharisees, giving thanks to God because they are not as other men, we could understand that their arrogance would provoke irritation. But no, they mourn over themselves, they smite their breast like the publican in the parable, or like the sinful woman in the Pharisee's house at Nain. If they were ambitious men, greedy of wealth and power, unjustly oppressing their brethren, and resorting to stratagem and violence for the purpose of being able to domineer, we could understand their conduct producing strenuous resistance, and their unbounded tyranny begetting fierce rebellion. But no, they are meek men,

ready to exercise forgiveness, and having no higher ambition than to be righteous. If they were hypocrites, laying snares in which to entangle their dupes, and practising falsehood and deceit, we could understand their being overwhelmed amid general indignation. But no, they are pure in heart, and have all the simplicity of a child.

How comes it to pass, therefore, that such men no sooner make their appearance than they are insulted, cursed, and persecuted? The fact is, there is an absolute contrariety between such as are poor in spirit and all that surround them. The world proceeds on directly opposite principles. Its delight is in haughty opulence and proud self-contentment, and here we have humility and self-renouncement. It admires and pursues a brilliant career, in which everything is joyous and in which the lust of the eyes can leisurely satisfy itself amid the splendours of luxury and amidst exciting fêtes; and here is repentance groaning amidst sackcloth and ashes, and confessing with tears in its eyes that there is none righteous, no not one. The world's faith is in the triumphant might which overcomes all obstacles and extends its conquests, sword in hand; and here is angelic gentleness, shrinking from wronging any, enduring outrage, but not returning it, offering the left cheek when the right has been smitten.

Lastly, the world cleaves to visible things, terrestrial realities; it does not wish to be spoken to about eternity and its terrible secrets: and here is the pure soul that sees God, and is earnestly seeking what is immortal and invisible. Can you imagine a more decided contrast?

In order to convince you that this is not an exaggerated view of the case, we would remind you of the circle amidst which the words of the Divine Preacher on the mountain were spoken. To whom did He speak but to fanatical Jews, puffed up with pride, who spent their time in praising their own merits and honours, and who had nothing but contempt and hatred for all who did not

coincide with their narrow views; who had but one kind of worship, that of their own greatness; and who dreamt of nothing but exercising vengeance on foreigners? Everything in them proclaimed,—"Blessed are such as deem themselves rich in virtue and righteousness; blessed are the strong and the victorious." When the beatitudes echoed through the wide world, beyond the frontiers of the chosen people, did they find the hearts of men better prepared to receive them? Can you conceive of an ideal more opposed to the meek ideal of the gospel than that of the great city which, like the eagle, had nothing

> "Qu' un regard pour mesurer le monde,
> Et des serres pour l' embrasser"—

[but a look to measure the world, and talons to grasp it]? Was not Rome, as its symbolical name imports, the city of physical force? Was not its dream an ardent and insatiable ambition, that never cries, Enough? All it understood was conquest and enjoyment; humility and gentleness were in its view the lowest degree of abjectness. Picture to yourself the western Babylon, as it is represented in the Apocalypse, its garments dyed in the blood which it sheds in torrents, and holding out to the nations which it has brought under its iron yoke the cup of infamous pleasure. The first Christian who approaches the city will bring with him the echo of the beatitudes, "Blessed are the poor in spirit, blessed are they that mourn, blessed are the meek." Clearly, it will be impossible to find revilings and cruelties enough with which to punish the foolish man, the madman, the Galilean. You have only seen the smiling picture of the Lake of Gennesaret, and of the grassy slopes where for a short space a crowd sits entranced at the feet of the Master. But if you will just measure the moral distance between Him and His fickle audience, you will see that never was tragedy sadder than this idyll, and that the Divine brilliance of evangelical truth, though so serene in its dawn, is more consuming than fire. "I send you forth

as lambs amongst wolves," said the Master. The logical conclusion of the six beatitudes is indeed the seventh, which speaks of blood and death.

The situation has not changed. The contrast between the natural heart and the ideal Christian is not less marked to-day than it was eighteen centuries ago. There is no less fondness for haughty virtue, triumphant power, gay worldliness. Let a true disciple of the sermon on the mount make his appearance, and he is one of the most inconvenient of accusers; his very presence is a condemnation of everything that is sought after, lauded, and worshipped around him. His gentleness and humility make him odious, because by these qualities he differs so thoroughly from the generality of men. If he were headstrong and ambitious, he would be endured and even approved, because the world would love its own. Thus nothing enkindles so much hatred as evangelical love. It veils itself and seeks to be hidden, whilst alongside of it proud worth sounds a trumpet to announce its good deeds. It passes on, with its eyes full of tears and its heart overflowing with Divine pity toward all sufferers, not asking for an inch of ground, oppressing no one, lifting up the broken reed and rekindling the smoking flax; it seeks not its own, is not easily provoked, thinketh no evil, hopeth all things, beareth all things. What could be more harmless, and better adapted to awaken general benevolence and gratitude? Yet it cannot move a step without being insulted, cursed, and reproached. It is in fact the living condemnation of selfishness and pride, and the world must either destroy its own idols or else heap curses on it: the choice was made eighteen centuries ago.

Further, if a man is raised up who fully realizes this holy ideal, a man who really shows what love is by laying down his life for his brethren, a man answering in every respect to the first beatitudes, it will be impossible to reproach and persecute him enough. Such a Man appeared, and He called Himself "the Man of sorrows." Who ever possessed poverty of spirit like Him who, though

rich, became poor, condescended to our low estate, and selected the very humblest rank amongst us? Who was ever humble like Jesus, who washed His disciples' feet? Who was ever meek and merciful like Him who, when grossly insulted, replied by bestowing blessings? Who ever fought the fight of righteousness and holiness as He did? Who ever saw God, and revealed Him in a manner so pure and perfect as the adorable Master who could say, "He that hath seen me hath seen the Father"? Who ever presented so marked a contrast to the world's ideal of human glory and material power as He who declared that He came not to rule, but to serve, who never accepted but one crown, the crown of thorns, and who never for a single day ceased to sacrifice Himself to this mission of redemption and consolation? Well, all this humility, all this purity, all this mercy ended in the cross. Can there be a more striking proof that ignominy and suffering may be expected at the close of a life devoted to righteousness and charity? It was not possible that the Son of man should not suffer these things, not only because of the sacred oracles which predicted His death, but also, and especially, because of the natural antipathy existing between the world and God, between darkness and light.

Since the time when Jesus appeared on earth, and shed His blood here, the cause of God has been personified in Him. Humility, compassionate love, righteousness, and purity have now nothing vague and abstract about them; these Divine virtues are connected with His person. Hence He boldly affirmed that suffering for righteousness' sake or suffering for His name's sake is one and the same thing. The position of His disciples is thus rendered more difficult because they are called to reproduce the features of that perfection which, as exemplified in Jesus, roused in men such a degree of wrath. Their holiness is a continuation of the holiness which was crucified eighteen centuries ago, and which is destined to be so again from age to age, as long as the world remains the world and is based on the

same principles. Further, Jesus was not satisfied with offering us an example; His holy life and His ignoble death constituted a redemption. The cross appears before us, proclaiming both our fall and our recovery. By teaching us at what fearful cost we have been saved, it reminds us that we cannot pay our own ransom. It proclaims our nothingness in view of the infinite character of Divine love. Thus, while humbling penitent sinners in the dust, it exasperates human pride, it is a stumbling-block to the Jews and folly to the Greeks; and the more so because, after striking a deadly blow at our false virtues, it preaches self-sacrifice, the death of the old man, in one word, crucifixion. Hence it happens that those who really follow it as their standard must expect all kinds of contempt, reproach, and persecution.

Besides, do not forget that you are not merely called to believe this folly of the cross, you must also proclaim it. You are witnesses for Christ; you must declare the Divine message in season and out of season; and if, in doing this, you make men feel its urgent character, you are sure to meet, first with disdain, then with hatred, and lastly with persecution.

I will go farther, and say that, leaving out of sight the testimony you must bear to the folly of the cross, if you are really hungering and thirsting after righteousness you will not shrink from reproach and suffering. Righteousness! it is not enough to worship it in secret, we must serve it without weariness, we must protest against iniquity—especially when it is triumphant, and espouse the cause of the weak and the oppressed. True, the Christian is a lamb that may be led to the slaughter, he will not open his mouth so long as his person only is affected; but he will raise his voice to defend his brethren's cause, the lamb will become a lion when contending against injustice. Do you think that we shall be allowed to use St. James's language with impunity, when seeking to condemn and punish the insolence and prevarications of the wicked rich man? Ask the prophets

what it costs, I do not say to proclaim the grandest mysteries of religion, but to attack those who wrong the widow and the orphan—Ahab robbing Naboth, and Herod taking his brother's wife. Ask the evangelical ministers in the Southern States of America, who declared that it is impious to convert a human being into a beast of burden, and more impious still to justify an abominable crime by quoting sacred texts; ask them what this simple declaration cost them! Away with the degraded type of a base and servile Christianity, always ready to bestow blessings on victorious might and on successful tyranny! Away with such a soft-tongued worshipper of success! Nothing under heaven is deserving of greater contempt. Such a man is a worthless instrument of government, who ought to be arrayed in the livery of a court valet. Let us maintain the honour of the gospel; let us always and everywhere call evil, evil; let us know how to say to men who have power, riches, and influence, "It is not lawful for you to violate right and to rob the weak." Our earnest voice will probably be drowned by furious cries. No matter: another voice will reply—that of man's conscience, rejecting with indignation an accommodating and flattering religion, but responding to a manly and heroic religion, for which righteousness is the only Divine right worthy of the name. Humble disciples of the meek and tender Master, you tremble at God's word, but you will not tremble before any human power, because you seek nothing from the present life, neither consideration, nor pleasure, nor glory. Your self-renouncement is your freedom. You are the intrepid defenders of a blood-stained banner. But be sure that if it protects you from the seduction of the world it does not protect you from its outrages and blows; and the more faithfully you serve your immolated Chief, the more will you be made to resemble Him. Disciples of the crucified One, you will yourselves be crucified.

II. It now remains for me to show, according to the

Saviour's declaration, that *suffering is a source of happiness.* "Happy are ye when men shall persecute you, and shall say all manner of evil against you falsely for my sake."

1. First of all, it is a *happiness to suffer for a noble cause.* He who sacrifices himself for an idea finds his reward in the sacrifice itself; it becomes dearer to him the more efforts and privations it entails upon him. It is grand to die for one's country, said pagan antiquity long ago; it is grander still to sacrifice ourselves for it when, along with our native soil, we can defend the liberty and independence of our fellow-countrymen. Self-devotion yields the deepest and most hallowed joy to the soul; carried to its utmost limits, it produces a sublime exaltation of sentiment superior to the highest enjoyments. What then must the fruits of devotedness be, when it is displayed in the greatest and holiest of all causes—the cause both of God and of humanity,—which combines in itself everything that is noble, everything that is good for time and eternity, the salvation of the immortal soul, the consolation of all sufferings, the consecration of all rights, the guarantee of all liberties? Suffering and dying for the gospel is suffering and dying for the family, for fatherland, for humanity, for righteousness, for truth, and I may add for God Himself, for Jesus Christ, since Jesus Christ, as we have seen, personifies the cause of righteousness and goodness. And if it is a grand thing to suffer for a noble idea, it is still more precious to suffer for a person. An idea is insensible to what we do for it; a warm and living heart is gladdened by our devotedness, as it would be grieved by our forsaking it. If we had the misfortune to deny Jesus Christ, we should meet the sad and penetrating look which pierced the heart of the son of Jonas as he stood in the high-priest's palace. But if we can brave insult and hatred for His sake, we shall behold His eye radiant with heavenly joy. Natural affections are sufficient to inspire an unreserved devotedness; true love will face death, and will do so as if about

to triumph; will it not be the same with Divine and supernatural love? Assuredly it will. He who knows what Jesus has done for him, and has understood the mystery of the cross, is eager to devote himself to the holy Victim. He knows that he can never cancel this debt of love. He feels nothing of the distress of the insolvent debtor. No, he delights to be insolvent; he delights to be overwhelmed by an infinite love, but in such a way as at least to show that he understands it. With what eagerness will he seize every opportunity of giving some proof of his gratitude. Oh! to suffer for the crucified One, what a privilege, what a joy! The greater the suffering, the more readily does love manifest itself, and the more real is the happiness which the breast feels in its inmost recesses.

In the time of the great Roman persecution a young wife lay on the damp straw of a dungeon, whence she was not to come forth except to be slain. While enduring the pangs of labour, she exclaimed, "To-day I suffer for myself, to-morrow I shall suffer for Him," and a Divine smile lit up her pale features. It was as if she had said, "To-morrow I shall show Him how I love Him." She knew also that she would not be alone in struggling against the teeth of the wild beasts; she relied on His promises; He would be there with her, near her heart. What happiness can equal that august presence? Happy will you be, said the Master, when you suffer for My sake, for then I will cover you with My shield, I will enfold you in My love. You shall not take a step along the path towards your Calvary without having Me at your side. I do not forget that your cross is My cross, and I will bear it with you.

2. The fact that suffering for truth brings with it its own reward is also a reason for real joy, as *it ensures the triumph of our cause.* It is a noble and powerful evidence in favour of truth that it is loved to such a degree. The pearl of great price shines with all its brilliance in the eyes even of the most indifferent, when

they see that we have sold all our possessions in order to keep it. Henceforth the value we attach to it is known; our humiliations and sufferings thus serve as means of honouring and glorifying it. Again, truth is not evil spoken of until it is understood, and until, coming forth from the twilight in which we too often keep it, it rises in all its terrible splendour. Christians, you are fortunate when you are insulted and persecuted, for this is the best proof that your testimony has been clear and decided, that the point of the sword has not been blunted. You acquire power in proportion as you provoke hatred, for if the children of darkness cast you out in their rage the children of light, who are seeking it with a sincere heart, come to you, attracted by the strength of your convictions. It possesses a stern and mighty charm when it has received the seal of suffering; your words are no longer faltering and uncertain, they fly like a dart hurled with a steady hand. It is felt that you are divinely sure regarding your position; your sufferings are the best guarantee of your certainty. Human wisdom, which is always mingled with doubts, dares not look you in the face. It feels itself defeated beforehand. The period of empty talk has been followed by that of a powerful and irresistible testimony; a prophet's and an apostle's word has resounded through the world, and great changes may be looked for. "Rejoice," said the Master, "for thus have they done to the prophets who were before you." In other words, you have added another link to the chain of heroic witnesses, your word is no longer as a sounding cymbal; it is a sword, the engraver's tool, with which God writes the sins of His people; it is also the word that brings light and life. The more it is accompanied with suffering, the more does its creative power increase; it is this which has rendered the preaching of the cross so efficacious. Vast suffering, vast power!

3. "Your reward is great in heaven," said the Master to His outraged and persecuted disciples, thus adding

the consolations of a glorious hope to those which flow from duty performed. The present is grand, even under the cross, because it is sweet to suffer for Jesus Christ and with Jesus Christ. But beyond our earthly life there shines a clear light, amidst the brightness of which truth appears triumphant. It is not destined to be always rejected, despised, crucified. The cross leads to glory. *Per crucem ad lucem,* we read in the "Imitation of Jesus Christ;" and this victory of truth is already gained in heaven. When the bold confessor of Christ has breathed his last amid reproaches and tortures, he passes directly from the hands of his executioners into those of the holy angels, who bear him to the foot of the eternal throne. There he beholds the same truth which cost him so much ignominy and such cruel treatment triumphant and honoured, for the heavenly hosts prostrate themselves in presence of the Lamb that was slain, and the very name which was so maligned on earth angels with their harps seek to bless and to glorify. It is not even necessary that the confessor should wait to be translated to the invisible world, in order to take part in the victory of truth. Before the eye of faith the earthly veil passes away. The prophet of the Apocalypse ushers us into the heavenly Jerusalem, and enables us to witness scenes of glory such as imagination never conceived. The Church militant participates in the holy delights of the Church triumphant; it sees the felicity in which all its reproaches and sufferings end. Thus, even while it is being mutilated, smitten, thrown all quivering into the arena whose sand is saturated with the blood of its children, it hears the cries of the blessed drowning the savage shouts of the circus. To the voices which exclaim, "The Christian to the lions," responds the chorus of prophets, apostles, and seraphim repeating with Jesus, "Blessed are they who are persecuted for righteousness' sake." Thus the men who are scarcely deemed worthy of pity would not exchange their low condition for a throne. "Our bonds," we read in the "Acts of the Martyrs," "are the jewels of our holy

betrothal to Christ, and our crown blooms on the thorns which lacerate our brows. When the winter is past and the storm is over, the flowers will appear."

4. This triumph of truth in heaven is not enough. It must have its *glorious revenge on the very theatre of its humiliations and conflicts.* The world must see how mistaken it was in rejecting it, and one day it will be forced to exclaim, "O Galilean, Thou hast overcome!" Yes, this long drama of history must have its *dénoûment.* Everything that has exalted itself against God must be cast down into the dust. The mockers and wits who uttered their sarcasms respecting the folly of the gospel must acknowledge that it was their wisdom that was foolish. They must look on Him whom they have pierced; they must see Him mighty and victorious, rising and judging the dead. "Let him who hath this hope in him purify himself even as He is pure." There is nothing in all this to imply that the Christian cherishes any secret hope of vengeance; such unwholesome dreams must be left to the implacable souls who imagine that the whole world is made for a few privileged people, and that the love of God is measured by their narrow views. No, what the Christian expects is the confirmation of all his hopes, the vindication of righteousness and truth. The last word of history must belong to God, otherwise God would not be God. In the gloomiest day let us banish fear; the final triumph is certain, and let us say to ourselves, Everything is possible save the defeat of truth. We fight for a course destined to triumph; let no base doubt ever trouble our minds. Let us cherish the joyous impulse (*élan*) of victory, and let us show that the Master spoke truly in proclaiming us happy when exposed to insults.

Our text has received the most striking confirmation from history. Remember that beautiful and noble chapter of the Epistle to the Hebrews, in which the sacred writer brings before us God's witnesses under the olden economy, each with his wound or his reproach. "They were stoned, they were sawn asunder, were tempted, were slain with

the sword; they wandered about in sheepskins and goatskins; being destitute, afflicted, tormented (of whom the world was not worthy); they wandered in deserts and in mountains, and in dens and caves of the earth." Now this chapter might be continued indefinitely. From age to age recruits are added to this army of confessors. "Let us look through the Acts of the Apostles," said a noble Christian, "and what do we see there but bonds and imprisonments, stripes and stonings? The book seems written with the blood of the apostles." The history of the Church is written with the purest blood. This procession of martyrs through every age is truly our Theban legion. Here reality rises above legend; everything is simple and noble, without theatrical show. The woman, the child, the old man take their places beside the strong man, the ignorant person beside the illustrious teacher; and all together declare that they are happy in having to suffer for Jesus Christ. This happiness makes them all invincible, from the first disciples in the upper chamber at Jerusalem to the humblest Christian of the present day, who in some secluded corner of the world endures persecution for his Saviour's sake, even though it be only that thankless and inglorious persecution which yields no earthly compensation,—such persecution as may be met with amid a circle of friends, or in the very bosom of our family.

In conclusion, let me express a thought which lies deeply rooted in my soul. In the present day we need to open our Bibles at the eleventh chapter of the Epistle to the Hebrews, not only to read it again, but to re-write it and to continue it. Nothing is more lacking in us than the holy suffering which is the result of a determined testimony on behalf of truth. And yet it is only at this cost that we shall be able to save the Church! The Church must be saved. Who is there in our country who doubts this, except those who are destroying it? Now be sure of this, it will not be saved by administration, but through suffering. Its business is not to inquire what the

authorities outside think about it, or what they mean to do. Their decision has not the weight of a straw in regard to its destinies. The point of importance is to know what the Church itself thinks, and what it is determining to do. The point of importance is not the favour or the goodwill of the powerful of this world, but its own fidelity, its determination to do its duty, its whole duty. The hour of its deliverance will not strike on a palace clock, but in its own heart as soon as it has recovered the heroism of its noble days, as soon as its testimony has the precision, the vigour, and the keenness of edge which cannot be resisted.

It is long since we heard among us a prophet's word, I mean a word stamped with the seal of suffering, one of those holy and bold words which the world has never been able to endure. Our Churches resound with miserable quarrels, like the temple of Judaism in the days of its decline, when rabbis filled the places of the seers. Everything was altered when the man of the desert appeared, with his hand raised against every idol, and especially when a Greater than he, truth's noble Martyr, scathed with His burning words the hypocritical and mercenary religion of the Pharisees. Then the disputatious school was succeeded by the Church born amid storms and beneath the cross. And the Church can only be saved in the way in which it was founded. This is why I proclaim beforehand that those among us will be blessed who are honoured to add fresh links to the chain of heroic confession, and who shall suffer for their Saviour. We have talked enough! the moment has come when we must all act boldly.

VI.

Compassion.

"Weep with them that weep."—Rom. xii. 15.

There is another kind of suffering, not less noble and not less holy than that of martyrdom, namely compassion. None can be more disinterested or more generous; for it takes us wholly out of ourselves, and brings us into thorough association with the sufferings of our brethren. It is the outcome of all that is purest in the Christian's soul, of the Divine love which lives by self-denial. There is no virtue more Divine than that of compassion, for by it we achieve the nearest approach to the character of the Redeemer. *Compassio est passio*, "Compassion is passion," said Origen with profound truth. Perfect love in Jesus involved infinite suffering, because He thoroughly identified Himself with all the disgrace and sorrows of humanity. The more we love, the more shall we feel the deep sympathy which unites us with all that suffer. Suffering at this elevation is a pure flame, bearing to heaven the holiest incense of earth. On the other hand, wherever this Divine pity is absent the altar is extinguished and the Spirit of Christ has disappeared. A Church which does not love those who are hurrying downward to ruin, which cannot weep over human misery, whose only care is for itself and its privileges, is not a Church; for it resembles its Head in nothing but the name, and it bears His name only to dishonour it. May I be able to convince you that no Christian grace should be more eagerly sought after than this broad and expansive love, which is inseparable from deep sorrow.

Let us, first of all, clearly understand *what compassion is.* Let us not confound it with a merely natural pity, with a sensibility which is easily aroused but still more easily comforted. All know what it is to feel a painful shock when brought into contact with some great suffering; there are scenes of destitution and despair which call forth tears from the most selfish: but this is a sensation rather than a sentiment, an excitement of the nerves or of the most superficial part of the soul, a passing excitement which does not survive the immediate cause which produced it, and from which recovery is very speedy when help is promptly given or a kind word is spoken. It may be a purely passive emotion. As in still water the reflection of a stormy sky follows that of a clear one, so the misfortune of others is reflected in our souls but in the same way as the passing cloud; these tears of instinctive pity dry up very quickly. Do not let us deceive ourselves; the world does not like sufferers, it does not like to weep with those who weep, it turns away from such, it creates a solitude around them, except in the case of some illustrious mourner whom it desires to flatter or court. It is perfectly true that in the present day much incense has been offered to suffering, but always on condition that it presents itself like René in magnificent mourning apparel, and that with Byron and Musset it sheds eloquent tears. In fact, the unfortunate are in the world's estimation like beggars; they are sources of trouble and annoyance. The usages of society do not permit us to dwell on the terrible reality of suffering: as a matter of good taste, it must be passed by in silence; it must be avoided like a contagious disease, and our duty in regard to it is thought to be discharged by a few commonplaces of sympathy. You know what they are worth, you who have been stricken amid the whirl of fashionable life; you know in what a terrible solitude you have found yourselves, irritated and exasperated by a polite insensibility, and nowhere discovering a heart that really bled for your wound.

Christian compassion rises as far above instinctive pity as Christianity rises above the world. It is not the effect of a natural sensibility; no, it has that stamp of the extraordinary which is the very impress of Christianity. To exercise compassion is, as the word signifies, to render the affliction of another one's own, to enter fully into it, to feel it as he feels it, to bear his burden with him, to bend beneath his cross, to be desolate as he is desolate, to be distressed with him. True love is far-reaching, like the love of God, embracing all sufferers, penetrating like His to the very depths of grief; it shares in its duration, for it neither grows weary nor vanishes like a passing emotion of the soul.

Compassion has a double effect: on the one hand it takes us out of ourselves, and makes us partakers of all that is most affecting in Divine mercy; it thus becomes the superior form of piety. On the other hand it imparts to us the greatest moral power for doing good to man, it opens our hearts, and we may regard it as the most effective method of conveying truth; it melts the thickest ice, and triumphs over the most inveterate prejudices. He who really weeps with those that weep displays in his sympathy a really persuasive eloquence. A comforter who has no tears of compassion is simply an unbearable talker; but he who has truly suffered from the ills which he desires to alleviate speaks in inimitable tones; the miserable listen to him with eagerness, they feel themselves loved; and once more afflicted ones, attracted by the secret charm, are seen following close after him wheresoever he leads them: happy are they, for they are led to the feet of Christ. Compassion therefore combines the most excellent graces. Let us earnestly promote its growth in ourselves; and, in order to this, let our eyes be fixed on the High-priest whose mercy was infinite; let us traverse along with and after Him the circles of human suffering in which we are called to exercise the loving ministry of consolation.

Compassion deems no kind of distress beneath her notice.

There are sufferings of an inferior order, affecting more especially our frail bodies which are so soon to return to the dust. Let us beware of disdaining such, because we pretend to a more exalted and spiritual piety. Let us remember the day when Jesus Christ, surrounded with innumerable multitudes who had followed Him into the wilderness and listened to Him for many hours, "was moved with compassion towards them, because they were hungry." He not only had pity on the poor man; He also placed Himself at his side and identified Himself with him, that He might more thoroughly help and raise him. Be sure of this, that if Jesus had not begun by showing compassion towards human privations and distresses He would not have had a single hearer, even though He should have displayed all the treasures of His consolation for higher sorrows. The poor man felt that he was understood by the Saviour, that he had His tenderest sympathy; and so he confided in Him, after being often so discouraged, rejected, and spurned by others. He will not return to the Christian Church till He find the same sentiments prevailing in it. We also are surrounded by a great and hungry multitude; it is massed together in our cities, it is thrust in between the bare walls of the most wretched abodes, its life is one of privation and anguish, with no security for the morrow, hardly earning a meagre livelihood, and ever exposed to lose even this. The gulf of poverty has been opened before the eyes of our terrified generation, and the cry of distress rising from it has made the most indifferent turn pale. The useless palliatives of a powerless or chimerical empiricism have only enabled us to measure its depths. Do you know the best means of filling it up? Descend boldly into it with Christian compassion; rise above a mere passing pity, and learn what poverty is by sharing in its sufferings. A man of real heart has shown us,* in

* M. Jules Simon, in his work entitled, "The Workwoman," "*L'Ouvrière.*" This discourse was delivered shortly after the appearance of the work, which still claims the attention of the philanthropist.

a book of eloquent simplicity, what in our advanced civilization is the most ordinary condition of woman among the labouring classes, in the manufactory, the workshop, or in the solitary labour of the garret; he has shown us what in her case the life of the family and of the heart has become in the midst of the privations, the feverish activity, and the cruel necessities which leave no time for lighting the fire on the domestic hearth or keeping up the pure flame of the home affections. Christian women who have read those pages, respected wives, happy mothers, who have time to love and enjoy all the delights of home, have your hearts been pierced as with a sword as you have reflected on this state of things? Have you felt compassion? In other words, have you associated yourselves with the sad condition of your sisters? Has it seemed to you that it was yourselves, yourselves in person, who had to earn your bread at this cost, to start off before daylight and leave your children behind you, to enter the vast workshops of luxury, where all your womanly feelings would be wounded, to return by-and-by to a cold and dull abode where weariness leaves no room for the sweet exchange of sentiment. Has it seemed to you that it was yourselves, you in person, who under the pressure of want had to work on wearily through the night, in order to gain a few pence in return for so many hours of toil?

Observe that I have thus far spoken only of ordinary circumstances in the career of the poor woman. What should we find it to be in what she calls hard times, when work fails, and the workshop is closed, and temptations assail her? Oh! if we had Jesus Christ's bowels of compassion, how great our anguish would be! We should not be able to endure the thought of these hungry multitudes, who in consequence of their hunger are so often led to ruin their souls; for that is one of the most frightful features of our civilization. The debauchery of the well-to-do classes has taken hunger into its service, for the purpose of keeping up the number of its

victims. Who therefore can pretend that we live in a world where everything is in order? There is a God above who beholds these things; and all these souls, treated with contempt by a world that has bought them only to pollute them, will be required of those on whom the responsibility rests. But in fact these horrible deeds are being perpetrated, they are increasing, close to our very doors, and yet we Christians remain quite at ease! And so we shall remain until we feel the burning compassion that is at present quite a stranger to our base and cowardly hearts; but from the day when we sally forth from our abodes, where everything smiles upon us, and get into contact with these terrible sufferings,—from the day when we feel them intensely, when this frightful burden weighs us down,—then in spite of every difficulty, in spite of the astonishment and mockery we may excite, we shall do something extraordinary in the matter of charity; we shall go and seek all who are lost. Men will say of us, "What! they keep company with publicans; fallen women have been seen with them." But on that very day publicans and fallen women will discover the road to heaven. On that very day Christianity will reappear in our midst, and we shall recognise it by this sign, it will search in the dust and mud for the missing drachma, the immortal but polluted and degraded soul, the jewel of the Lord trodden under the foot by the passer-by. On that very day the sick, the blind, the paralysed will find again their best Friend. On that very day we shall perform miracles, miracles of love; then it will be seen what resources for sufferers were treasured up and hidden in our houses; by our liberality we shall multiply our loaves, we shall pour balm into every wound, and the most soothing balm will be found to consist in our tears of compassion. If therefore you ask what is to be done, in order to effect these great changes, and to follow the example given us at this hour by evangelical England, which has overcome all prejudices and descended into the lowest depths of physical and moral misery,—if you

ask me what is to be done to imitate the few Christian souls amongst us who have followed this impulse but without as yet imparting it to us,—I should say to you, "Weep with those that weep." Put yourselves in their position, and suffer what they suffer, remembering that if faith is a lively representation of the glorious realities which are on high, love is first of all a lively representation of the sad and miserable realities which are here below.

There is a special reason for the development of a practical charity which pours oil and wine into our social wounds. It is thus that the condition of the pauper has become one of the principal subjects of study in our day. To their honour we must admit that social questions have their noble side of generosity and brotherhood. Woe to the Church, if it should allow itself to be distanced in the path which its great Head has opened up before it! It would very properly lose all claim to be heard. When a religion falls below the level of the general conscience of the day, it is ruined. When paganism was decaying, there came a moment in which man felt himself to be greater and better than his gods, and then it was he exclaimed, "The gods are departing." Jupiter was nothing better than a worm-eaten idol, from the day when his former worshipper caught a glimpse of an ideal superior to the worship of the past. I am well aware that Christianity in itself will always far outstrip all our aspirations; but its unworthy representatives may degrade it, this or that Church may fall below the general conscience. Now this is what would most certainly happen if we allowed our minds to become indifferent to the sorrows of poverty whilst other minds are regarding them with such deep interest. Let us understand the signs of the times. Let us say to ourselves that our ecclesiastical establishments will be regarded with pity if they do not become a safe refuge for all kinds of misery, if we are not at the head of the noble philanthropic movement which is going on in every direction.

You claim, we shall be told, to have acquired at the feet of Christ an almost supernatural love for suffering humanity; give us then such a proof of this as shall in itself be supernatural: if you do not, we shall not believe you, and we shall reckon you among the theorizers about love who simply say to the poor, "Go in peace, be warmed and be filled." True, the gospel has not left to others the work of chastising the inconsistencies of pretentious Christians; the terrible irony which I have just recalled was uttered against them by St. James eighteen centuries ago.

If Jesus Christ felt compassion for physical suffering, He had no less pity for the *sufferings of the heart.* I do not refer as yet to the great moral wound which He came to heal, I refer to all the pains arising from wounded and blighted affections. The Redeemer of the world could not endure the sight of a widow following the bier of her son, and I have already shown you Jesus groaning and weeping at the grave of Lazarus. Mary and Martha felt that their sorrow had become His; "Behold how he loved him," said the Jews. How rare and short-lived in us is the generous sympathy which really makes us partakers of the grief and anguish of our brethren! "Who is weak, and I am not weak?" said St. Paul (2 Cor. ii. 29). This is love, and its hallowed fellowship. Let us confess that we have a very imperfect knowledge of it. That which does not affect us personally only just touches us, and too often does but glide over the surface of our souls; beneath all our protestations broken hearts discern a secret indifference, something very ordinary and cold; they say to themselves as they listen to us, "It is very easy for them to talk about endurance and resignation; what would it be if they themselves had to bear the heavy weight which crushes us?" The afflicted would not use such language if they felt that we had made their trouble our own, and had passed through the deep waters with them. We slept, like the disciples in Gethsemane, while they were enduring

agony of soul; and we thought it enough to utter a few words of sympathy when they returned to us. We have no right to offer ourselves as comforters if we have not fought and wept with them, and if they have reason to say, "What, could ye not watch with us one hour?" You will think perhaps that life with such conditions would not be tolerable. I cannot say what it might become; or rather I believe it would be great and noble, and that in any case it would be helpful to others. Enter a house of mourning with a heart full of emotion, and still re-echoing with the blow which has been struck; go thither, not to perform a social duty or a Church duty, but impelled by a sympathy that moves your very deepest feelings; mingle your tears with those that are flowing there, and you will see how much good you will do to the afflicted, what gentle influence you will exert over their heart: then speak to them of Him in whose name you went there; you will thus have opened the way for Him, and have done more by a few tears than by the noisiest protestations.

But there is a greater calamity than bereavement, or poverty, or any earthly affliction that can be imagined; it is that of the immortal soul, which is hurrying on its way to ruin. What are all the sorrows in the world compared with the loss of a soul, the worth of which exceeds that of a whole world? This is the disaster, this is the destruction, which should distress our hearts. This was the bitterest drop of suffering in the Saviour's cup. I find traces of it everywhere in His earthly career. We have seen Him moved to pity at the sight of the hungry multitudes; but how great was the compassion which, according to the gospels, He felt for the scattered sheep of Israel, who were wandering without a shepherd, seeing that their guides had become mercenaries and thieves who were leading them far away from the sheepfold. One moment it seemed as if they would return to the care of the Shepherd who gives His life for His sheep; the people followed close on His steps, they hung as it

were on His lips: but they only sought after the bread which perisheth. When Jesus refused to break it again, the people withdrew, and cursed Him whom they had desired to proclaim as their king. And then, contemplating with unspeakable sorrow the trooping multitudes who were forsaking Him, and having only a small group of disciples about Him, He said to them with all the grief of misunderstood affection, "And you, will you also go away?" Why that complaint, that other and still more distressing word, addressed to His first hearers who had now become His enemies, "Ye will not come to me that ye might have life"? Ah! He knew, He truly felt that they were destroying themselves; this destruction was a reality in His sight, He sounded its depths, He foresaw all the misery and despair which would follow it. He wept for those who did not weep, but who were so soon to weep when there would be no hand to wipe away their tears, tears that burn but yield no profit. Hence there is some one sadder than the young rich man who rejects salvation and departs,—namely He who called him, because He knows what the young man did not know, because He holds the secret of his awful destiny, and suffers from it for him as if He were entering upon it Himself.

A moment came before the end of His earthly career, when all these feelings burst forth from the Redeemer's broken heart in a word which is like the sigh of His misunderstood love. "He came unto his own, and his own received him not." In vain did He multiply the signs of His power and love; in vain did His word resound in the streets and squares of the Holy City; in vain did He go everywhere doing good. The Divine message has been rejected, and the nation that has slain the prophets and then built their sepulchres is about to put the King's son to death,—Him who has come to replace the servants of the master of the vineyard, that He may utter His last and most solemn appeal. Every effort has been useless; the hypocrites and the materialistic

priests have been too much for Him. Jerusalem has allowed its day of grace to pass away, and now all is over; the rebellion is about to bear its fruits. For the last time Christ addresses Himself to the ungrateful city; He beholds it from the prophetic heights, whence His eye scans the future; He sees it ruined, smitten with the curse, and disappearing beneath a deluge of blood; He sees the temple rased, and the rebellious race wanderers in all lands; above all, He beholds immortal souls, which might have escaped, involved in condemnation. And yet,—as He says to Himself,—I came to save these men, they drew near to Me, they heard Me, My hand was stretched out toward them, they had only to lay hold of it. When Jeremiah cried out, "O ye that pass by, say is there any sorrow to be compared with mine?" he was seated on the smoking ruins of the city of his fathers, and groaning over the exile of his fellow-countrymen; it was for earthly misfortunes chiefly that he wept. The sorrow of Christ was a hundred times greater; the Divine Prophet, like another Jeremiah, has before His eye very different calamities and a much more terrible ruin; and these souls who reject Him, are they not much more ravaged with evil and scepticism than the soil of Zion in the days when the king of Babylon wrought destruction there. Further, you will not find in Jeremiah a more saddening word than that in which Jesus Christ expressed His grief; "Jerusalem, Jerusalem, thou that killest the prophets, and stonest them that are sent unto thee, how often would I have gathered thy children together, even as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings, and ye would not!"

But the unhappy fate of Jerusalem was not the only source of anguish for the Redeemer's heart; there was also that of the whole ruined world, which He desired to save. We have already remarked that the profound experience of human perversity was in His case a real moral crucifixion. All the pains which a sinless being could not know, such as remorse, inconsolable regret for

lost happiness, absolute estrangement from God, in one word hell, Jesus knew them all by the power of His sympathy. Yes, He wept with those who weep without hope in the place where the Lord can no more be called upon; He knew what perdition was, so thoroughly did He enter into human misery in its extremest consequences. Those who imagine that He could not know hell, except by being actually subject to the curse of condemnation, do not know what love is; they do not understand how far its compassion reaches. It was precisely because He saw everything, experienced everything, and suffered everything appertaining to this generous sorrow, that though free to withhold His life He gave it. Tell me not that there is a contradiction between the agony of His last night and His heroic bearing at Golgotha; it was because Christ saw into the abyss of terror and misery into which a rebellious race must be plunged, that He unhesitatingly ascended the steps of the fearful altar. Ah! in order to close such a gulf, to snatch one soul from it, it was worth while to go through all the humiliation, all the tortures of the accursed tree, and even the mysterious abandonment of His Father. Such is the compassion of a God who became man.

It is especially for this sad condition of men that we should feel the poignant compassion which formed so large an element in the Saviour's sufferings. Do we believe, yes or no, that there is but one Name given under heaven whereby men may be saved? Do we believe that no one shall see the kingdom of God except he is born again? In one word, do we believe in the gospel, in redemption? To believe in salvation is to believe in perdition. Salvation has no value, except as perdition is a reality.

Now if we believe these things, how does it come to pass that we are so calm and so peaceful in presence of the innumerable souls that are perishing? The fact is, our faith is vague and weak. Spiritualize as you may the images by means of which perdition is set forth,

allow to Divine love infinite resources for reaching the souls who have ignored it here below,—but admit that for the finally rebellious soul, which has rejected, though fully acquainted with the consequences, the only means of salvation, there is an abode of despair and misery, a dark dungeon, where the immortal soul only lives to consume itself, far away from the God whom it would not serve. Jesus, the tender and merciful Friend of humanity, did not cease to warn men that the broad way in which they are walking most surely ends there: and whosoever throws a veil over condemnation is a blind leader of the blind; he says, "Peace, peace, where there is no peace;" he is a seducer and a deceiver, and the idealized Christianity which he preaches is a lie. He is the flatterer of the world, and there is not a false prophet whose teaching is more mischievous. For myself, it is because I believe in condemnation as I believe in salvation that I appeal in all earnestness to your consciences. But if I had the feelings which Jesus Christ had, if like Him I had sounded the abyss at our feet, if I had felt the night from which all brightness has been excluded descending and resting on my soul, if I had a real idea of condemnation, if I had wept as He wept over misguided Jerusalem, oh what urgent words would I address to you! how they would subdue and pierce you! and how such appeals, coming from a heart full of compassion and feeling a holy grief for lost souls, would vibrate within you! how under these words, all too cold, there would boil a vehement affection, irresistible in its intense earnestness.

What I say of the preacher I might say of every Christian. What is wanting to enable him to win for God all the souls who surround him, unless it be the holy grief of compassion, I do not say for their momentary sorrows, but for the inconsolable misery which hangs over their head? What have you most deplored hitherto, the afflictions or the unconverted state of those whom you love? When sick, you surround them with the tenderest attention, you watch by their beds, you

share their ills; if they are smitten in their property, their reputation, or their affections, you feel yourselves smitten with them; if they are happy, your joy is complete. And nevertheless they are in a state of perdition as long as they have not given themselves to Jesus Christ! yet this is almost a matter of indifference to you. Beware, you are unconsciously deluding yourselves; you feel for them sentiments so tender, so benevolent, that it seems impossible to you that they should not be shared by their Judge and yours; and you forget that He loves them infinitely more than you love them, but that if He has done everything to make their salvation sure He will not save them without faith in the Saviour. You cannot imagine that it is possible you should ever be separated from them, and you forget that natural bonds do not become eternal except as love according to the Spirit sanctifies love according to the flesh. You forget the Saviour's word, "One shall be taken and the other left." You forget that Christianity, which often divides the family in this life, may divide it much more thoroughly in the life to come. Such thoughts are painful; I apply them simply to your present relations, knowing that death has its merciful mysteries and convinced that a large number of those who have disappeared from amongst us have turned a last look toward the cross. But this hope, all too vague alas! must not lead us to cherish a deceitful security. It is time to labour for the salvation of those who are left; salvation is within their reach, and we can do much, everything perhaps, to bring them to Jesus Christ. It is because I have this assurance that I do not shrink from distressing your minds; I could wish to do still more, for I am certain that what is wanting in us is this distress, this grief, this terror at the thought of a possible perdition. A compassion which goes down to the very depths of a destiny of suffering leads us to utter such urgent entreaties that the hardest heart cannot long resist, especially if we are guided by the tact of

charity. Do not be satisfied therefore with loving, with surrounding with care and affection, those with whom you live; do more, take pity on them, cherish a holy and tender pity for their souls. Yes, pity for the souls entrusted to you, and which will perish if you do not snatch them away from the world. Pity for them! Let everything in your manner form as it were an urgent appeal to them; surround them with an atmosphere of truth and love, travail in pain for them, and do not cease your efforts till you bring them to Christ as the glorious spoil of the long contest of compassionate love.

Love has no bounds but the world. You have no right to shut yourselves up in the enclosure of your family; the Christian's heart should love all that the Saviour loved. Stretch your compassion therefore, till it reaches all who groan and suffer here below. There are moments when you get, as it were, a glimpse of the misery of the whole race, when all that is sad and distressing in the whole range of existence vibrates within us. Such moments are too infrequent; they are blessed, they enlarge the heart; through the greatness of suffering they give us a presentiment of the greatness of consolation. But without embracing the whole world, and in order to escape from the vagueness amid which such feelings become indistinct and then vanish altogether, let us simply try for one moment to conceive of the amount of misery reigning in our own immediate neighbourhood. Have you sometimes thought of the amount of sin and sorrow which the omniscient eye of God beholds in a single day? If we could for one instant embrace at a glance the whole of such a spectacle, we should be overwhelmed by it. Who can say what is hidden beneath the veil of one single night? Who can count the tears, the falls, the degradations, the despair, the criminal actions, the desolate agony, the deserted deathbeds? Who can count the blasphemies and sobs, the accursed hatred, and the still more accursed love? Who can unfold the conflict of passion in hearts inflamed by

the excitement of life? and who in short can reckon up the vast amount of evil, and the consequences that must follow it, in one of the days which seem to the thoughtless to glide by so rapidly?

This is what is transpiring everywhere beneath the skies; and yet their serene light still shines on this corrupt world, the symbol of an unwearying love, because since the cross of Christ was planted here it is no longer a world living under the curse, and it is enough for the most depraved of its sons to turn a trustful look towards this cross, and everything will be set right. Hence the use of remembering the corruption and misery of our race, when we possess the true consolation. If we were to shed over it more bitter tears, if we felt for this lost and yet saved humanity a more powerful compassion, we should be seen dealing out with less of avarice our efforts, our gifts, and our prayers, as our personal contribution to the great enterprise by which it is sought to convey to the world the words of eternal life. The world would then be for ever rid of the selfish contentment of an empty Christianity that talks of nothing but joy, as if our personal salvation satisfied the immense love of God; in the highest sense of the word, we should fill up the sufferings of the Saviour who suffers for every lost soul until it has found life.

I am well aware that there will always be a frightful disproportion between our task and our efforts; but what we cannot perform we can talk about to God, that He may accomplish it. By means of prayer, the Christian who weeps with those who weep discharges the most touching and the most blessed priestly office. Every day, along with his own burden he carries to the foot of the cross that of his brethren and of the world, and thus by his merciful ministrations he connects himself with the high-priesthood of the new covenant. It is thus that suffering, begotten by sin, but subdued and sanctified by grace, becomes through compassion a most noble and beneficent ministry. After cursing suffering as Job did,

we come at length to exclaim with St. Paul, "I will glory in my infirmities." This is the gospel's last word respecting affliction; let it also be ours. What more consoling solution can we find for the mystery of suffering than that which reveals glory as even now contained in suffering itself?

Christian Mysticism.

CHRISTIAN MYSTICISM.

"Lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world."—MATT. xxviii. 20.

EIGHTEEN centuries ago a strange scene took place upon the Mount of Olives. The Master was about to quit the earth, which had received Him only with reproach and persecution, and which He had watered with His blood. He was surrounded by a little group of poor and mean men. They were the few disciples whom, during His ministry, He had gained to His teaching. They were men destitute of anything that could win or allure the world. They had not on their side that animal and often irresistible strength of numbers, which attracts the masses as a great river attracts the water-courses. They were an insignificant minority. Nor had they the consideration which is attached to rank and riches. They were boatmen from the Lake of Gennesaret, accustomed to earn their bread by the sweat of their brow. None of them had graduated in those celebrated schools which sent forth the doctors of the law; they were unlettered and ignorant men, and as soon as they opened their mouths their accent betrayed them as Galilæans. At this time, they had not even those great endowments of the soul—ardent faith and devotedness—which can assert themselves more mightily than learning or reputation. They were, as yet, men of little faith, incapable of comprehending the sublime thoughts of their Master, and mingling with His teaching more than one prejudice of their age and nation. A few days before, they might have been seen in dastardly flight

while Jesus was being led from judgment-seat to judgment-seat.

It is no exaggeration to say that this handful of men represented all the weakness and poverty of humanity. And yet to them the Redeemer commits the charge of continuing and completing His work. "Ye shall be witnesses unto me," He says to them, "to the uttermost part of the earth." "Go ye and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost." That is to say, He sends them forth to the conquest of the world. Strange conquerors, verily! strange army for such a battle! In the depth of their ignorance and weakness they are to encounter all the combined forces of Judaism and paganism, which will league together to stifle in its birth the religion of the Spirit. The most desperate resistance will be organized against them. The Jewish priesthood, with its prestige, with its claim to speak in the name of the true God, with its train of rabbis and Pharisees, upheld by the vast and intractable pride of a fanatical people, idolizing its own institutions; the brilliant society of the pagan world, carried to the highest grade of culture, with its philosophers, its poets, and its compact masses crying with one voice "Great is Diana of the Ephesians" (because the adoration of nature lays no check on its voluptuous worshippers): these are the obstacles which the Galilæans will encounter on their way, these the foes with whom they must do battle. Judged externally, nothing can transcend in folly the command of Christ; but stay, to the command is joined a promise, "Lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world." The mystery is solved. An infinite power will be latent in all this weakness,—a Divine Captain will be at the head of these sorry soldiers; He will speak by their mouth, and teach their hands to war and their fingers to fight. He who has created and saved the world, can He not subdue it?

Think not, my brethren, that the Church of our day

has less need of this Divine assistance, or rather of this Divine presence. The task assigned to her is neither less, nor less hard, than that of the first disciples. To her children also it is said, "Ye shall be witnesses unto me to the uttermost parts of the earth. Go ye, teach and baptize all nations." Leaving aside the large portion of our world which still belongs to paganism, we have incessantly to reconquer the countries in which the Cross has been set up; and it is a work of greater difficulty to evangelize nations, Christian by virtue of a rite but heathen at heart, than it is to present for the first time a truth which has the charm and the power of novelty. We are less than ever disposed to encourage self-deceptions, after having, in these great Christian conferences, courageously probed the wounds of our age. Have we not verified, in the heart of our so-called Christianity, the alarming progress of that undying paganism which bows down before the created, especially before the creature, and sets up the worship of man—of his passions, his pride, his reason, in opposition to the worship of the living and true God? Who may not well tremble at the thought of the conflicts in which we are engaged, and of those which await us? Who may not well feel ready to sink under the charge laid upon him, since it involves not only the subjugation of the heathen world to the gospel, but the re-conquest of a faithless and rebellious world, which imagines itself to have got beyond the truths presented in the gospel to it? "Who is sufficient for these things?" None but He Himself who gave the commandment, and who linked inseparably with it this glorious and Divine promise, "Lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world." This is all our hope, our strength, our joy. I would fain show you to-day how it may be realized by us. Give us, O Christ, at this hour, a proof of Thy presence more convincing and more direct than all our feeble reasonings! Come Thou into the midst of us, and speak as Thou didst speak to those who were around Thee on the Mount of Olives, that,

filled with sacred joy, we may exclaim, as we leave this house of prayer, "Surely the Lord was here!"

How then does the presence of Jesus reveal itself to our hearts? This is the subject of our discourse. I would say, first, that He is present with us by the memory which He has left. A tender and faithful memory really gives a place among the living to beloved ones who are gone. After the first wrench, the first terrible anguish of separation, it seems as though they came back to us. We see again their beloved forms; we hear their voices; they are ever with us as an encircling thought. You will not contradict me, you who have known the bitterness of mourning, when I say that in the family circle the place most constantly filled is the empty place. "Far from the eyes, near to the heart;" such is indeed our feeling to those who have gone before us into the eternal home. So is it also, in an especial manner, with the great servants of the truth whom God has recalled to Himself. Though dead, they yet speak; and their voice, as it comes to us from beyond the tomb, has accents of new tenderness. But what dear and hallowed memory shall we compare with that which Jesus has left? The mightiest names—those of the heroes who have overturned or renovated the world, of illustrious warriors, of men of noble genius—lie, as it were, buried in the memory till some special circumstance recalls them to our attentive admiration. But the name of the meek and lowly Master is written in the depths of our hearts; and while all else vanishes like the track on the sand, the mark He has graven shall never disappear. There is not in the whole history of man a trace so deep and permanent as His.

But, my brethren, the purest memory, left to itself, quickly fades. Little by little, though it may retain much of its brightness, it becomes indistinct. Therefore do we value so highly any likeness of those we love, though it be preserved but in a portrait of mediocre merit. What a still greater privilege do we find it to

hold communion with them again,—to feel, as it were, the living breath of their souls upon ours, through the medium of their written words. If we have kept but a few characteristic expressions, they are enough to bring back to us the whole character. Now God has taken care that the memory of Christ should be preserved for us in all its purity. He has not left it to the capricious fantasies of man's imagination. Mere tradition soon envelopes the highest realities, as the parasitic moss covers the hardy trunk of the oak. We have the living portrait of Jesus preserved in the gospel. What painter can be compared to Matthew or Mark, Luke or John? With what a tender touch have these represented the sacred figure of their Master! With what divine art have they learned, in the depth of their love to Him, never to interpose their own feelings or thoughts between us and Him; so that their story is like a transparent mirror, in which His perfections are faithfully reflected. Yes, these gospel witnesses give us a present Christ. As we read them with melting hearts, we feel as if we had lived with Him. We see with our own eyes that which they relate. We seem to be present with the multitude on the hill-side, where He gave the charter of His kingdom; we are with Him in the boat tossed by the tempest; we hear His discourse with the woman of Sychem; we follow Him along His suffering way to the final hour of love and sorrow.

But we have more than these simple and pathetic narratives. We have the very words of Jesus,—those words such as never man spake, so simple and so grand, so true and so profound, the inimitable language of eternal truth, manifested rather than demonstrated; the perfect expression of love, equally tender and severe, by turns supplicating and commanding—the voice of a God, but of a God-man. The compassionate heart of the Saviour throbs in every utterance—His word is Himself. As we hear Him in the Divine Book, He is truly with us, and the gospel is itself a sublime realization of His promise.

But is this all? My brethren, no; and I confess to a secret impatience to get beyond these preliminaries of my subject. The presence of Christ is something more than a memory, though it were the most living and faithful of all memories. It is more than a marvellous history. Had He left us only a book, He might have founded a system but not a religion, for this is precisely the distinction between a school and a Church; the former deals only with principles, the latter is linked altogether with a living person. It is enough for the disciples of Socrates or Zeno to preserve the thoughts of their master, and to draw from them their logical consequences; they do not need his presence. But take away the Master from the disciples of Christ, and they have lost all, because the original and distinctive feature of their faith is just this, that truth has come forth from the region of pure ideas as a living reality, and that the "Word made flesh" is henceforth the very spring of their moral life. They have need of Him every hour, to receive from Him strength, consolation, holiness. He is the vine of which they are the branches, and that is no dry and withered trunk from which they receive life and fruitfulness. When He said therefore that He would be with them to the end of the world, He used no figurative language, He spoke a simple truth. He meant to say that in a real sense He would come again to them; and He is come. We believe in a risen Christ. Daughters of Jerusalem, carry home your sweet spices; for the grave is empty, He who was dead is alive again and liveth for evermore, and lives among His own. Believe in Him.

If He is not risen, we may well ask, how has the deception been carried on for eighteen centuries? Was not His resurrection the basis of the apostolic preaching? Does not the whole Church rest on this glorious fact? And shall we be persuaded that this majestic building, which has been the refuge of generations, has no surer foundation than the sand of legend or myth? What! has the world been renovated, and have myriads of

Christian souls been comforted, by an imposture? I can understand indeed how the gospel should be attacked because it contains this folly of the resurrection; but that men should pretend to accept the gospel, while they take away this miracle, which is the keystone of the arch of Christianity, or, which comes to the same thing, that they should treat it as a point of no importance—this passes all comprehension. For ourselves we will not have a Christianity which is no Christianity, a gospel of which all is accepted, save its most characteristic fact. It is not enough for us to know that the Master of truth appeared long centuries ago; we want to gather round Him, to hear Him as in the days of His earthly sojourn, to find in Him that fulness of actual life which is possible only through the resurrection; and we cling joyfully to that which has been the universal faith of Christians. We adore a Saviour truly risen from the dead, and ascended into heaven, and constantly present in our midst by His own Spirit of promise. Thus only have we the fulfilment of His pledge, "Lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world."

He has kept His promise, and keeps it perpetually. He is present in the world, there to carry on His redeeming work. He still walks in the crowded streets of our cities, and along our country lanes and highways, seeking the lost sheep, calling the children of men to repentance, carrying Himself the message of pardon to those poor in spirit who are ever the Father's welcome guests. But there is one place which is the sanctuary of His presence —that is the Church. His presence is the one condition of Christian worship. In vain the gorgeous cathedral, if its chief glory be not the presence of the Master. He will leave the "awful arches," with "carved nook and fretted bend," for the unadorned upper chamber where loving hearts call upon His name. How beautiful is the worship over which He presides! He is present when we speak to Him; not one of our petitions falls to the ground; He suffers not even the angels to gather them

in their golden censers; He Himself receives them straight into His compassionate heart; our prayer is blended with His own. He sets His seal upon it, and, made powerful by His *Amen*, it opens heaven above us and sends down the plentiful showers of blessing. He is present when we open the Book of God: and it is no more to us a dead letter, hard to decipher; every word resounds with His living voice. It is an arrow from His quiver, which transfixes our hearts and consciences. He Himself wields the two-edged sword, which divides even the joints and marrow. He is present when the psalm of the Church rises to heaven, bearing upwards that ineffable yearning of the spirit, that infinite adoration of the heart, which no mere words could render. He is present when the ambassador of truth comes to declare the counsel of God. Yes, unworthy as we may be of our commission, we believe that He does not leave us in our own impotence, but deigns sometimes to speak by our lips. Without this hope, we should not dare to ascend the pulpit, for we should bring to you our own barrenness. But if He comes up with us, the earthen vessel, however frail, contains nevertheless a heavenly treasure. His strength is magnified in our weakness, and the preaching of the gospel fulfils its end.

But there is one moment sacred above all others, when His holy presence is revealed to us in all its sweetness and power; it is that in which we gather around the table of the Lord. It is He Himself who passes the cup from hand to hand; Himself who breaks the bread and says afresh, "This do in remembrance of me." Under these symbols the eye of faith discerns Divine realities, the heart kindles with holy love. Then come tears of deep repentance, but not of despair; then the feeling of adoption into the family of God becomes a holy constraint, and the desire burns to give ourselves without reserve to Him whose body broken for us we behold. Then are drawn closer the bonds of brotherly love without dissimulation. Have we not indeed experienced, as often as we

have gathered round the table of the Lord, with hearts open to its rightful influence, that which Moses experienced in the presence of the burning bush? God is there, manifest to our consciousness. We too, evangelical Christians, believe in a real presence, a presence all the more real because it is purely spiritual. We do not need that our Saviour, in order to communicate Himself to our souls, should disguise Himself in material elements.

Yet let us never forget, my brethren, that worship in spirit and in truth is not now confined to a sanctuary, as in the Jewish service. The time is come when every spot of a redeemed earth is a place for worship, and the whole life may be dedicated to the service of God. Whether we eat, or drink, or whatsoever we do, we may do all in His name. Therefore Christ has not promised that we shall enjoy His presence only on certain days, and in certain consecrated places. Nay, He has said, "Lo, I am with you alway." He is with the Christian workman, earning the bread of his family by humble toil. He is with the woman of low estate, attending to the duties of her home, and lifting her little child to Him, that He may bless it with His smile. He is with every one of us in the pursuit of our daily calling, if we dignify it by a sense of duty. He is with the husbandman bending over the furrow, who sees as it were re-enacted before his eyes the most beautiful parables of the gospel, and who, as often as he goes into the fields, may be reminded of the Divine Sower, who with open hand scatters the seeds of life. He is with the poor Christian who trusts in Him, and who is cheered in the midst of anxious and disquieting thoughts, by remembering that the Master whom he serves once had not where to lay His head. Finally, He is with all the afflicted who seek His aid; upon His breast they lay their heads, and His own hand wipes away all tears from their eyes. "Lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world."

In the Church of the first disciples this glorious pro-

mise received its fullest accomplishment. When we pass from the study of the four gospels to that of the Acts of the Apostles, we seem to have a continuation of the same narrative. It is still the history of Christ, the invisible indeed instead of the visible Christ, but still of Christ ever present with His own. It is He who speaks. Do you not recognise His voice in that telling, thrilling sermon on the day of Pentecost, which bowed the trembling multitude to the dust, and wrung from three thousand lips, as from one man, the cry, "What must we do to be saved?" That profound apprehension of the holy oracles, those irresistible accents, come not from the son of Jonas himself. It is the Lord. Do you not discern Him in those miracles of mercy, which are never barren displays of power, but expressions of supreme compassion? Is not the healing of the paralytic in Solomon's porch the counterpart of that at Bethesda? It is the Lord. Whence that heroic attitude of the first confessors before the sanhedrim? Of what they were capable, left to themselves, let Peter be the witness, as he goes out to weep bitterly, having denied his Lord. But that very Peter, recreant then before the taunts of a woman, stands now steadfast and immovable before the first tribunal of his people, and yet as far removed from the reckless boldness which once made him untimely grasp his sword, as from the cowardice which led him to a shameful fall. Calm and courageous, he unites gentleness with the strength of an indomitable resolution, and gives to Christian faithfulness a formula for all time, in the words "Whether it be right in the sight of God to hearken unto you more than unto God, judge ye." Surely it is the Lord. Do you not recognise Him in the form of the martyr, bearing, as Justin Martyr says, His distinctive mark—the cross? Who but He so patient under insult, so full of courage and tenderness in the midst of torture? Do you not hear again the prayer of the Crucified, ascending above the taunts of the tormentors,—"Father, forgive them, they know not what they do"? It is the Lord. Is He not

felt in that love of souls which no danger can daunt, in that consuming zeal for the house of God, that entire submission to His will,—in short in all those Christian virtues which shine so luminously in the apostolic Church? Did not St. Paul speak for all the apostles, when he exclaimed with holy enthusiasm "I live, yet not I, but Christ liveth in me"? His continued presence was a fact, which His bitter enemies felt they could not escape. They thought to have done with the importunate Innovator, who disturbed all their calculations, on that day when they crucified Him. But no! In vain the guard around the sepulchre. With whitening lips, they were fain to admit that He was risen, that He had re-appeared in the streets of Jerusalem, had shown Himself unto His own, and as it were multiplied Himself in them. They felt that they had to fight with an invincible power, which possessed an endless vitality, intangible, immortal as spirit. From age to age the miracle has been renewed, though never in so impressive a manner. The Christ has ever re-appeared in His Church; and now, in these solemn assemblies, in which are represented all the sections of evangelical Christianity, we have felt His breath warm and pure upon our souls.

A dream! an illusion! perhaps one of my hearers may be saying. This Christ, who you say is present in the midst of us, I have never seen. You have never seen Him; but have you looked for Him? Have you opened that inner eye which discerns Divine things? There is a sense of the Divine, as there is a sense of the beautiful. If you have allowed this to grow dull, you can no more grasp that which passes immediate observation than you can perceive the brightest of the most distant stars, without the aid of those powerful lenses which indefinitely extend the field of vision. Can a blind man disprove the sunshine? And you are voluntarily blind. You believe not, because you close the eye of the soul. With such dispositions, you would comprehend nothing, even if the grand scenes of the gospel were passing beneath your

eyes. Had you been a contemporary of Christ, you would not have really seen Him. You would have known Him according to the flesh, outwardly; you would not have known Him after the Spirit. How many Jews of His own time saw and heard Him; and yet having eyes they saw not, and having ears they did not hear! Priests, Pharisees, doctors of the law,—all sons of Abraham, all educated in sacred things,—were present when He gave the grandest exemplars of holiness, the most touching proofs of love; yet they saw nothing. They stood by when He wept at the grave of Lazarus, when He took the children in His arms and blessed them; and they saw no beauty in Him. They were there when He died for the sins of the world, raising the ideal of love to a height which the most sensitive conscience had never conceived. To them there was nothing but a common scaffold, justly reared for a common agitator. They saw nothing; and you will see nothing of the Divine and supernatural, so long as you remain in your fatal insensibility. You have limited your horizon to a few steps before you, and you do not dream that, beyond those narrow limits, glorious scenes are enacted, which fill us with an ecstasy of grateful joy. You are like the servant of the prophet Elisha, who saw on the horizon only clouds drifted by the wind, while his master beheld the angels of God hastening to the deliverance of His people. Oh! if for one day, one single day, that veil were lifted, which hides from you the higher realities, you would burst the thraldom of low delights and impious pride, and would acknowledge that we are not following cunningly devised fables. Then the question of religion would be placed before you in its true terms. You would understand that you are not simply repudiating a system, or rejecting a book. You would see the very Christ of the gospels standing at your door, and waiting till you open. You would see His thorn-crowned brow and hands bearing the print of nails, while upon you would rest a look tender, reproachful, sorrowful. Would you have the courage to drive away this Divine

Suppliant, and to say to Him, "Get Thee hence, I will none of Thee"? Nay, it could not be. In the day when you learn to know Him whom you are rejecting, to know Him not as an abstract insensible idea, but as a living Person —living, though for your sins He once was dead—you will no more be able to stand before Him cold and contemptuous. In the presence of this immeasurable love, your knees will spontaneously bow, and weeping you will echo that adoring lay of the disciple, vanquished by the presence of the Master, "My Lord and my God." But know that if the veil which hides Christ from you remains upon your eyes, it is because you will have it so, and your unbelief is without excuse.

Without excuse? Have I the right to use such language? Is there not an excuse for the unbelief of our contemporaries? and is it not we Christians, unworthy of the name, who furnish it? Our generation has not seen Christ. But have we made them see Him? Have we shown Him to them in the life of the Church? Which of us can say, "It is no more I that live, but Christ that liveth in me"? Has not the world a right to say, as it gazes on our colourless Christianity, so puny, so devoid of heroism, "Christ is no more set forth before us; we have seen but His ghost"? If He truly lived in us as in the first days of the Church, indifference would not be possible. A great shaking would be produced. We should excite more hatred, but we should also enkindle more love. We should be cursed, but heard. True and upright hearts would be drawn to a living Christ, which will never pulsate towards a faint and feeble Christianity.

Ah! my brethren, it is time that He, the mighty and loving Saviour, should be manifested again in our midst. This is the most urgent need of His Church. We are right, no doubt, to concern ourselves about its re-organization, and to endeavour to perfect in it the harmony between order and liberty, between the respect for Divine authority and those rights of religious individuality which are the noblest heritage of evangelical Protest-

antism. But of what avail will it be to have exalted the throne of the Divine Head of the Church, by removing every rival power, as well that of the civil authorities as that of mere numbers, if the throne itself is empty, and should remain empty, as a judgment on our coldness and formalism? We are right to aim ever progressively at worship more worthy of the God who is a Spirit, and more worthy of the immortal soul made in His image. But if Jesus be not the Alpha and Omega of that worship, the beginning and the end, we shall never succeed in kindling a holy fire, and rising to that true adoration, which is one of the great aspirations of the Church of our day. We are right in giving a large place to Christian practice, in extending missionary and benevolent operations; but if the Church is a busy Martha, who has no leisure to sit, like Mary, at the feet of the Master, to listen and adore, her activity will assume a pharisaic character. Charity itself will become a routine, and pride will make its gain out of the most Christian works. We are right in attaching great importance to the progress of true religious knowledge, and in striving for the steadfastness and purity of the faith, by the deep study of theology, which, without ignoring tradition, goes back to the ever living and springing fountains of revelation; this is one of the great necessities of the Church of our time. But what is theology, apart from Jesus Christ? It is but a vain abstraction, a science without an end, and an idle play of the spirit with ideas which have neither substance nor reality. Evidently then it is the return of the living Christ among us, which will bring the solution of all problems, and primarily of that hard and grievous problem, our spiritual poverty and impotence, even with the vast riches and inexhaustible resources of the gospel on our side.

My brethren, if there is a false and dangerous mysticism, which exalts itself above revelation, and under the pretext of an inner voice, lends its sanction to all the follies of humanity, there is a true mysticism, which,

while humbly submitting itself to the word of God, sounds the depths of that word and sucks its hidden sweetness. The former raises before us only a brilliant mirage, which does not come down from heaven, but rises from the heated sands of the desert, the fantastic creation of man's imagination, enticing only to mislead. The latter, on the contrary, deems it wild presumption to desire to possess any truth richer and more vast than that which comes from God. What can we seek beyond the infinite? But this infinitude of love must be sounded, in some sort, by the heart and conscience and the intuitive faculties. This is the holy task of Christian mysticism; beneath the form, it seeks the substantial reality; beneath the written, the living word. It seeks Thee, O Lord, in Thine own revelation, finds Thee, possesses Thee. In one flight, it rises above the ever cloudy regions of religious metaphysics, in which nothing is clear and defined; and while the reason is still searching and groping, the heart adores. Personal union with the Eternal Word is an anticipation of direct vision. Whenever we pray and worship, we realize this mystic union. It is thus, my brethren, we enter the holy of holies of the new covenant. Too long we have lingered in the majestic court of the spiritual temple, admiring the beauty, the grandeur of Christian doctrine. Of all this, there shall not remain one stone upon another; for faith, that is our present imperfect knowledge, shall be done away, when the veil shall be lifted, and to the dim shall succeed the beatific and glorious vision.

Love alone is eternal, because love is of God. Let us then cross the threshold of the temple, let us pass through every other inclosure, till we reach the inner sanctuary, where the soul is lost in love. There the Divine Master is awaiting us, and like the well-beloved disciple we shall lean on His bosom, and our life shall be hid with Him in God. Then we shall know what it is to be with Him always, and the promise of my text will be perfectly fulfilled in us.

We are deeply convinced, brethren, that it is our duty to make every effort for the development of this Christian mysticism. To these blessed heights those eminent servants of God, who had been so long our guides, pointed before they left us. Read again Vinet's "Regard" and the "Adieux" of Adolphe Monod, and you will find in them a tone very new in the religious literature of our time. We are carried back to the great mystics of the middle ages, to the saintly forerunners of the Reformation, or rather to that glorious school of Ephesus which by the dying lips of John epitomized its whole theology in the single word, "God is love."

For ourselves, my brethren, we will sum up all the thoughts and feelings filling our hearts at this moment, in the simple, touching prayer of the disciples at Emmaus, "Master, abide with us, for the day is far spent." The night is at hand: the night which strikes its first melancholy hour as the sun of youth, of strength, of happiness, sinks to the horizon, and the heart sighs with the poet, "Oh, dark the night and chill." O Jesus, abide with those of us who are going down the hill of life; and then, when upon the grey horizon we see the dawn of the eternal morning, we shall know that old age is but the herald of the day which has no night. Night! the hour of mourning, of anguish, when all that made the outward brightness and the inward joy of life has vanished. O Jesus, abide with those of us whom trial has darkened; and the cloud shall be spanned by an arch of hope, the shadows lightened by holy love. Night! the Church's night, the hour of doubt, of discouragement, when one great period of religious history is closed, and another is preparing, but in obscurity and confusion, often amidst conflicts and difficulties without and within. For us this hour of peril and of pain has struck. O Jesus, abide with us, and then we shall believe in the morning. We shall await it with joyful assurance, and our present darkness shall be like the summer nights beneath the pole, already radiant with the anticipated brightness of the

morrow. Abide with us, O Master, and we shall be equal to all toils, all sorrows, all perils, in Thy presence, suffering with Thee to-day, to reign with Thee to-morrow, ever with Thee, in Thee. "Come, Lord Jesus, come quickly!"

The Voice of the Church,

AND

The Cry of the Christian Heart.

THE VOICE OF THE CHURCH,

AND

THE CRY OF THE CHRISTIAN HEART.

"But whom say ye that I am? Peter answering said, The Christ of God."—LUKE ix. 20.

FOR a few days, withdrawing from the multitudes which usually thronged His footsteps, Jesus has retired into that grand and beautiful tract of country which lies between the white peaks of Hermon and the wooded hills of Nephthalim. There the Jordan, but just escaped from its sources, bounds tumultuously among the oleanders, more like a torrent than a river. This northern province is too far removed from the centre of the theocracy, to be reached by the disputations of the schools. There Jesus has not by His side spying Pharisees and Sadducees, who curl the lip whenever He speaks of the unseen world. On the eve of the great conflicts which await Him, He is gathering strength in solitude, and contemplating His work itself, apart from the excitement of His active ministry. He has passed the night in that sublime communion with the Father which is His comfort and strength; from which He comes forth to say, with perfect submission, "Lo, I come to do thy will, O God;" and speaking of His cross, exclaims, "The Son of man must suffer many things." Every one of those hills, therefore, on which He goes up to pray becomes to Him a mystical altar, on which He offers Himself, a spiritual sacrifice. Never more fully and clearly

conscious of His mission as the Redeemer, than after this holy season of prayer, He chooses this moment to question His disciples as to what are their thoughts about Himself. Let us not forget that when Peter answered he saw upon the face of Christ that heavenly brightness which, from the days of Moses until now, has illuminated the face of all who have come from the heights of communion with God, and which must have shone with purest lustre upon the brow of God's only and well-beloved Son.

"Whom say ye that I am?"—a question, of all others, the most important. For the apostles, the answer would determine, whether they had been mistaken in joining themselves to this Jesus of Nazareth, in forsaking for Him their boats and their nets, and, harder still, in forsaking for Him the recognised leaders of their people, notoriously hostile to the Galilæan Teacher, in preferring that voice crying from the wilderness to the grand, commanding voice of temple and tradition.

For us, my brethren, the answer will determine whether He who has given His name to the modern world shall reign over the future, as He has reigned over the past; whether He shall restore the ruins of many generations; whether the Church is built upon legend or fable; whether the Christian soul is the subject of a mocking dream; whether it is our duty to repudiate all that hitherto has been the object of our steadfast faith, our anchor of salvation in the storm, our well assured hope. For us, it will determine whether or not we must give up Jesus; for if He is not that which He claims to be, we will cling to no idle fiction. It is a thought at which my heart trembles and is troubled: yet I will follow unshrinkingly where inflexible truth shall lead; for I will never lean upon a lie, I will never be one of those who *will* be comforted, even if they are deceived. Who then, in very truth, is this Christ? This I desire to know. This is the question of most solemn import, the question not

of an individual, but of an age; for the problem of Christ is becoming ever more and more identified with the religious problem itself. Thanks to the vigour, and I may add to the logic, of the attack upon religion, its cause has become one with the cause of the gospel. The reproach of theism is scarcely less than that of the Cross. The time is not distant when, in the world of thought, Jesus will truly personify the cause of the immortal soul, and that of the free and personal God, no less than that of redemption. We rejoice that it is so; and this is, in our view, one of the advantages of the moral and religious crisis through which we are passing.

I cannot undertake to-day, my brethren, to treat such a question in all its bearings; this would be nothing else than to attempt the whole Christian apology. I shall simply show you that the reply which was given to the question of Jesus eighteen centuries ago, in that obscure province of an obscure land, in that despised corner of the earth, is in truth the reply of the Church universal in all ages, as given not only in her great historic tradition, but in the experience of the humblest of her children. The voice of history and the voice of individual conscience alike re-echo it; it is the testimony of the ages, it is the spontaneous cry of the believing soul. This is the plan of my discourse.

Let me ask you to observe that I do not take my stand on external authority. I do not seek to make any man's conscience bow under the yoke of the past. It is a noble remark of Tertullian's, that "Jesus Christ said not, I am custom, but I am truth." Truth is not to be accepted because it is ancient; but because it is founded upon the eternal needs of our hearts and spirits, and because it has received the confirmation of facts. If I seek the truth of history, I do not ask its juridical titles, and shake the dust from well-worn parchments, that I may decipher there its claims to our subjection. No, beneath the tradition I seek the living soul, and on the same ground I

shall make my ultimate appeal to-day to yourselves, to your conscience, to your inner nature. This double testimony will convince you that the son of Jonas was indeed the organ of the Church universal when he exclaimed, "Thou art the Christ of God." May every one of those who listen to me repeat, with bended knees, before the cross, this simple and glorious confession of broad spiritual catholicity, that which belongs to no time or place, nor to any external institution, but embraces all living souls who share the faith of Peter.

Let us first set aside the false interpretations of our text.

It has been lately asserted, that when Jesus put to Peter the question in the text He was Himself ignorant of the true nature of His mission, and that it was the reply of the disciple which suggested to Him to declare Himself from this time as Messiah. If this be so, the parts must be at once reversed, and we must say openly that the disciple was the Master, and the Master the disciple. It was not then Jesus who chose the twelve; rather, it was the twelve who chose Him and raised Him to this high rank, somewhat after the fashion of those barbarous tribes who were wont to select some comrade from their midst, and lift him to the throne. We cannot conceive on what ground such an assertion can be maintained. Was it indeed only at this late period of His ministry, that Jesus claimed the dignity of Messiah? What interpretation is put then on all His previous acts? In order to draw a conclusion to fit the theory, it must be needful to efface from the gospel record, the baptism in the Jordan, the call addressed to the disciples, all the miracles of Jesus, and all His discourses. If He does not believe Himself to be Messiah, by what right does He call those young Galilæans, to forsake all and follow Him? How dares He, in the synagogue of Nazareth, before those who have seen Him grow up in the workshop of Joseph, apply to Himself the great oracle of Isaiah, which proclaimed the Deliverer of the future, the One sent to preach

the gospel to the poor, to heal the broken in heart, to declare the acceptable year of the Lord? "This day," said He, "is this saying fulfilled in your ears." We need ask for no more than that one page of the gospels, which has found favour with the most negative school of criticism, —that Sermon on the Mount, which has been arbitrarily isolated from all the rest of the sacred narratives—in order that we may discern and hail Messiah in the bold Preacher who places Himself above the law of Moses, who does not hesitate to take up some of the precepts of the first Divine code, and to use in reference to them such words as these, which would be blasphemy in any other mouth than that of God's Anointed:—"Ye have heard that it hath been said by them of old time, Thou shalt not kill. But I say unto you, Whosoever is angry with his brother without a cause shall be in danger of the judgment." * What Being, less than Messiah, would dare to identify His person with the cause of righteousness and truth, so that to suffer for righteousness, or to suffer for Him, is one and the same thing? "Blessed are they that are persecuted for righteousness sake." "Blessed are ye, when they shall persecute you, and say all manner of evil against you falsely, for my sake." † Lastly, my brethren, our text itself implies that Jesus was conscious of His high dignity. Why this insistence upon His person? If He is only the master of wisdom, the teaching alone is of importance, the teacher retires into the background. Plato never asked his disciples what they thought of him; he demanded simply the reception of his system. And in this lies the difference between a philosopher and the founder of a religion, between the mere teacher and Messiah.

Let us admit then that there is no plausible ground for asserting that Jesus did not possess, from the time of His manifestation to Israel, a clear conception of His dignity as Messiah, and that such an assertion controverts the distinct testimony of the most incontestable

* Matt. v. 21, 22. † Matt. v. 10, 11.

portions of our gospels. From the very first, He acted as Messiah. If He had not until this day made His Messiahship the subject of conversation with His disciples, this reserve was only in harmony with the wise method of His teaching, which ever gave time for the fruit of truth to grow and ripen, before attempting to pluck it. He would never pour new wine into the old bottles, but slowly and gradually, by contact with Himself, He formed and moulded the minds of His disciples to be vessels purified, fit, and able to contain the great thoughts of the Master. He places within the heart the seed of truth; but it is His will that we should make it fruitful in labour and sorrow, that it may become truly our own. If, directly and without preparation, He had revealed His Messiahship to His disciples, their eyes would have been dazzled with the too sudden brightness; they would have been the passive guardians of a tradition, which they could neither grasp nor comprehend. It was far otherwise on that day, when it became self-evident to them that Jesus was the promised Deliverer. The revelation, which had descended from above like the first ray of dawn, now springs up from the depths of Peter's soul. Such is the true foundation of spiritual religion, as opposed to all beliefs imposed by authority. Let us add that the Jewish prejudices with regard to a temporal Messiah, who was to be a sort of Maccabæus, seeking as his first great aim to restore by the sword the national independence, imposed much caution on Jesus in asserting His high dignity. If He had directly proclaimed Himself at the commencement of His ministry, the people, filled with enthusiasm at the sight of His miracles, would have seen in Him the very Messiah of their dreams; He would have fostered those fearful misconceptions, which were in reality the great obstacle to the accomplishment of His redeeming work. His disciples also belonged too much to their age and country, not to be misled into the same illusions. Therefore He waited till the time of popular favour was over, before He spoke to them of the

glory which belonged to Him. He accepted the public triumph, only when He knew that the triumphal entry was the way to the judgment-seat; He declared Himself king, only before the tribunal which was about to condemn Him: the cross was His only throne, the crown of thorns the only circlet on His royal brow, because in Him the King and the Victim must be one.

There are yet other false interpretations which we may not pass by in silence. It is maintained by some that Jesus, in questioning His disciples from time to time as to His true nature, admits the variety of their replies and leaves the question open, so that the Church is the arena for the collision of the most diverse opinions upon the fundamental points of religion, a school of disputation, embracing the most direct contradictions. Whether such a notion as this be connected with our text or not, it is certain that it is more widely diffused than ever in our day, and that it forms the basis of an ecclesiastical theory which, under the delusive name of liberty, seeks to consecrate the wildest anarchy. No, it is not true that the question who and what is Christ is left an open question. Assuredly, Christian theology is right, nay I will say more, it is fulfilling its most bounden duty, when it endeavours to make its formulas express as nearly as possible the great Divine realities which are presented to it. It would be idle to pretend that it has not had gropings in the dark, errors, and consequent diversities. If it is intended to say that the *doctrine* of Christ remains an open question for theology, I admit it the more freely, because I firmly believe this remains an open question even to the angels of God, who, desiring to look into its depths of mystery and not being able, bow themselves in adoration, on the brink of the abyss of love Divine. But what we affirm is that, before theology and above it, there is a living faith, and that this furnishes the decisive answer to the great question concerning Christ. Ever since the confession of Peter this problem has had its solution: if it were not so, the Church would

have yet to be born. Without certainty on this point, Christian witness is nothing, apostles are nothing. They are but mere adventurers seeking the conquest of humanity: the lovers of novelties may listen to them a moment, if their language be eloquent; but they will make but a vanishing furrow upon the heaving sea of human opinion, tossed to and fro as it is with every wind of doctrine. If the Church has nothing exact, definite, authoritative to reveal about her Founder, then the world may well say to her as Felix to Paul, "Go thy way for this time, when I have a convenient season I will call for thee." If she brings but one doubt the more, but a new uncertainty, let her cease to take the attitude of religious affirmation, let her lay down the insignia of the faith, and let those who call themselves her ministers invest themselves with the philosopher's mantle, and come down into the public square, to blend their voices with the hoarse murmur of universal doubts.

Assuredly, on such conditions, Jesus would never have spoken of a rock that could not be shaken, upon which He would build His Church. With its foundation in the sand, it would long ago have tottered to its fall, in the shock of the first tempest. But no! the grand confession of Peter has revealed, below the shifting earth, the rock which defies the ages. The Church rests not upon an ever-repeated interrogation, a question perpetually in debate. It rests upon a question finally answered, in other words upon an indestructible belief. It is composed not of those who seek, but of those who have found the great solution.

Do we then, brethren, alienate from the kingdom of God all who are seekers still? do we ignore their search after truth, honest as it may be? Far from it. We believe the kingdom of God extends far beyond the Church; it includes the whole of humanity, which, redeemed by the blood of Christ, is destined to salvation unless it obstinately put it away. This is the Divine field, in which, day by day, the seed is sown, and upon which God

makes His sun to shine and His dews to descend. This is Christ's inheritance, purchased at the price of His death, and which is to be made His own possession. But it is none the less true that it is not enough to remain in these regions without, and that it is needful to pass from this universal kingdom of God into the Church, by a personal and solemn act of faith, which consists precisely in saying with the first disciples, "We have found Messiah." Those then who are yet seekers are on their way to the Church; but they are not yet in it, they have no right to govern, still less to teach it. We hold out to them a brother's hand, we call them to us, we recognise all that is noble in their disposition; but yet they are not of us, if they have not yet accepted the essential principle of the great religious society. In vain they may produce the most illustrious religious genealogy, or diplomas signed by theologians of highest degree. Can they, or can they not, use as their own the words of Peter? If they cannot, they are not members of the Church; that threshold they can only cross with the apostle's adoring confession on their lips, "Thou art the Christ of God." But are we therefore prevented from recognising the religious element which they already possess? No, my brethren; and provided their incomplete belief be not declared sufficient and on a par with that of the Church, we gladly receive it, as a new tribute of honour to Jesus Christ.

Observe, my brethren, that Jesus begins by asking His disciples what the people think of Him; and the opinion of His contemporaries was, no doubt, favourable to Him, though it remained below the truth. "Whom say the people that I am?" "Some say, John the Baptist; but some say Elias, and others say that one of the old prophets is risen again." What is this but a confession that even in the eyes of the thoughtless and materialistic multitude, which had gathered around Jesus in the towns and villages of Galilee, without accepting His words, His very appearance had sufficed to call up

an image of greatness, far surpassing anything they had previously seen? The multitude, ignorant and earthly, yet felt that the new Prophet presented a type of perfection, for which they could find no just comparison. They likened Him sometimes to the stern and fiery Elias, or John the Baptist; at others, as Matthew distinctly tells us, He seemed to them tender and pathetic as Jeremias; and yet none of these heroes of the old covenant fully realized the ideal of moral purity, of which they were conscious in Him. Thus instinctively they declared Him to be *the* Man, the very Son of man, presenting in sublime harmony the various perfections, which hitherto they had known only in incompleteness. No doubt, the bias given by hatred will falsify this spontaneous testimony rendered by the human soul to Jesus Christ; but whenever this is left to express itself unrestrained by pressure from without, it will declare His incomparable glory.

And in our day, in the midst of so much enmity and rebellion against God and against His Anointed, do we not hear, above all hostile voices, the tribute of humanity to Jesus of Nazareth? Should Jesus ask us now, as He asked His first disciples, "Whom say the people that I am?" we should be bound to reply, "They say Thou art the greatest among men; that no name has ever taken the place of Thine, exposed though it has been to as many centuries of insult as of adoration. The people, who know Thee so little, are yet aware that there has been none like Thee to love them and to lift them up, so that even those who will lead them from Thee are fain to cloak their designs under cover of Thy pure memory. Even the hatred of Thine enemies proclaims Thy power; for such fierce attacks are not made upon one who is dead. If it were true that Thou art still sleeping under the stone in the sepulchre, Thy name would long ago have ceased to be heard in the strife of the living. If that name is still the banner in all our battles, as has truly been said, it is that Thine is still the highest life in

the world of thought. The multiplied attempts to distort Thy sacred image, when it can no longer be passed by, witness how formidable Thou art to a philosophy, which will none of Thee because it will none of God. No, Thy glory is not departed, O Christ; and it is not true that we have now only Thy dust to reverence. The nineteenth century will see Thee, at its setting as at its dawn, outliving all those who had sounded the knell of Thy religion. By all its voices, alike by those that blaspheme and by those that worship, it confesses that among the children of men there is none like unto Thee."

But this general testimony, ever vague and incomplete, cannot in our day, any more than in the day of the apostles, stand in stead of the direct and exact testimony of the Church, such as found utterance in a sacred hour from the inspired lips and adoring heart of Peter, "Thou art the Christ of God;" in other words, Thou art indeed the Messiah, prophesied and prefigured throughout the Old Testament, the promised Deliverer, the Servant of the Lord, by whose stripes we are to be healed; Thou art the Great Ambassador, the Representative of God; and, to use the language of the same apostle on a similar occasion, "Thou art the Son of the Living God," the Redeemer, who, by reconciling both in His person, unites humanity and Divinity; Thou art the sovereign Lord of our hearts.

Let us now show, my brethren, that the reply of the son of Jonas is in truth that of the Church universal. Theology may vary, as I have said, in the explanation of the fact; but in substance it has never been denied by the Christian conscience. The confession of Peter stands ever and everywhere inscribed in letters of fire,—"Thou art the Christ of God."

And first, I thus read it on the frontispiece of that apostolic age which, to me, is not simply the first cycle of the history of Christian thought commencing its widening circuit, but the creative period of the Church, the age of primitive witnesses, crying with one voice, "That which

we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked upon, and our hands have handled of the Word of life, declare we unto you." This authoritative testimony is also unanimous. It is not true that the Christ of the fourth gospel differs from the Christ of the synoptics, and that St. Paul is not in accord with Matthew, Luke, or James. After thirty years of hot argument and deep research, science is justified in concluding that there were not two opposing systems of Christianity in the first century—that of the synagogue and that of the apostle of the Gentiles, or of the school of Ephesus. We do not deny that between James and John there may have been an accumulating wealth of revelation, or, at least, that the Church may have become more clearly conscious of the Divine treasure committed to her, and may have gradually disengaged herself from the swaddling clothes of her infancy; but, from the very first, I behold her prostrate before the feet of Christ.

Repair in thought to that upper room in Jerusalem, which we are told by some was but a synagogue of Judaizers. What is the one Name we hear? The name of Jesus. To the crowds gathering around the apostles, His name alone is proclaimed. The public squares echo with it; the new teachers avow it boldly before an implacable hierarchy; they invoke it when a miracle is to be wrought: "in the name of Jesus of Nazareth," says Peter to the lame man at the temple gate, "rise up and walk." His Divinity is not stated with that precision of formula which will be afterwards adopted; but everything in the primitive Church proclaims it with inimitable power. To Him the Church looks for the pardon of sins, for the conversion of souls, for the restitution of all things. For Him she braves suffering, reproach, and menace, and counts it all joy to be cast into dungeons, and to endure scourging for His sake. For this holy Son of God, as the first Christians call Him, they are ready to bear the loss of all things. St. Peter, once so wavering, stands before the sanhedrim with heroic firmness; and why,

but because he sees before him his well-beloved Master once condemned by the same tribunal, and feels himself sustained by Him? The thought of the Master covers him as with a strong shield of defence, and he dares to fling in the coward faces of his judges the name of the Crucified, saying boldly "You have crucified the Lord of glory." Covered with reproaches and dishonour, he departs from the council, rejoicing that he is counted worthy to suffer shame for the name of Jesus.

Look at that young man about to be stoned. Whence that radiance of joy upon his face, that light of heaven on his brow? His face is as the face of an angel, because he has seen in glory the Master for whom he is about to die, and He is holding forth to him the crown of life. The first of the martyrs dies with a prayer to Jesus on his lips.

Do you desire yet further proof? What is that vision, at which Saul of Tarsus falls smitten to the earth, on the road to Damascus? It is the vision of the glorified Saviour, saying, "Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou me?" Why does that same Saul spend a life in weariness often, in perils often, till he falls at Rome under the axe of the executioner, but that the same Saviour is for ever present with him, and he is constrained to say that he will know nothing among men, save Jesus Christ and Him crucified? All through Christ, all for Christ; this is his motto, this the secret of his strength, of his courage, of his unwearying devotion. It is by preaching that doctrine of foolishness,—the Son of God humbling Himself and becoming obedient unto death, even the death of the cross, dying for our sins, and rising again for our justification,—that he founds those great Churches which are the jewels in his crown as an apostle, that crown of grief and glory.

This grand missionary, this profound metaphysician, is the great mystic of the primitive Church. The most ardent words for the Divine Master fall from his lips. Not content with giving Him the central place in the

work of salvation, by the doctrine of justification by faith, he multiplies indefinitely the forms of language, nay he must break through or blend all figures of speech, when he will express the love that burns within him towards his Saviour and his God,—Him by whom all things were made, and whose blood has reconciled all things in heaven and on earth. When we recall the date of Paul's epistles, all written before the year 65, we are bound to admit that this glorification of the person of Jesus is in no degree the growth of tardy metaphysics.

The beloved disciple, dying in the evening of the apostolic age, has but one name on his failing lips,—the name of Christ. The fourth gospel is the temple of the Incarnate Word; it is filled with His glory. Every Christian, after reading it, is ready to fall on his knees with Thomas before the risen Saviour, and to exclaim, "My Lord, and my God." Love to Jesus kindled at Ephesus that pure and holy fire, which sheds brightness over the whole Christianity of the first century. That which has been called by consent the school of Ephesus is the school of the most tender, the most devoted love, which leans ever upon the breast of Jesus, thence to derive eternal life.

Nor let us forget that this light, which lightened the lofty heights of the apostolic age, descended into the plain to flood all hearts with brightness, and to rejoice that multitude whose names have found no record in history, but who composed the first noble Church of Christ in the East and West. We find the same idea in a more popular form, in that portion of our sacred books in which the criticism of negation refuses to see anything more than an idealized Judaism. Who is He, who in the Revelation receives the adoration of saints and angels? Who dares to call Himself the everlasting Word? Who is in the midst of those thousands of the redeemed, who have washed their robes and made them white in His blood? It is Jesus. Who in the epistle of James is called, without reserve, "the Lord of glory?"

It is Jesus. He it is, as we have already shown in the interpretation of our text, who in the first three gospels identifies Himself with righteousness and all holiness, makes His person the centre of the religious life, declares Himself to be the object of faith, performs, in forgiving sins, an act which belongs to God alone, and makes the sacrifice of His own body the foundation of the Christian passover. He it is, who, after having declared that none knows the Father but the Son, and the Son but the Father and he to whomsoever He shall be revealed, takes his place without hesitation on the very throne of Deity, commanding His disciples to "baptize all nations in the name of the Father, of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost." Thus do inspired voices join with one acclaim in the ascription of Peter, "Thou art the Christ of God." This is the grand and immortal Apostles' Creed: not that which was gradually formed, article by article, during the early ages of Christianity, and which deserves to bear their name only for its fidelity to their spirit; but that which contains the essence of all their piety, their faith, their life, that for which they lived and died, and which they bequeathed to the future as the very soul of Christianity.

The heritage has been preserved, my brethren, and faithfully transmitted. It is obviously impossible for me to lay before you all the links in this great chain of Christian tradition. I shall content myself with a more rapid and general survey. Let us place ourselves now on the threshold of the second century. The last of the eye-witnesses has passed from earth. The creative word which said "Let there be light" is heard no longer at Jerusalem, at Ephesus, at Corinth, at Athens. The new generation has not seen Christ in the days of His flesh. It is a great crisis for the Church; for it is to prove whether the memory of the Redeemer will ineffectually pale: this will infallibly be the case, if He is but a teacher like others, if He has no continuing presence among His disciples. But His promise does not fail; He is mani-

festly with these new disciples as He was with the first, and they bear the same witness to Him. Listen; it is Clement of Rome who exclaims, "Behold the way of our salvation, Jesus Christ, the High-priest of our sacrifice. By Him the eyes of our heart have been opened; by Him we behold the things which are in heaven. We have found a refuge in the Divine compassions, through our Lord Jesus Christ, to whom be glory and honour for ever and ever. God has been pleased to bind us to Him in everlasting gratitude, by the glory of His majesty, which is so much higher than the angels', as He hath a more excellent name than they."* It is Polycarp who thus replies to the proconsul, when urged to revile Jesus Christ:—"For eighty-six years I have served Him, and He has done me no evil. How then shall I curse my King and my Saviour?" As he is led forth to die, he turns prayer into praise, saying, "Almighty God, Father of Thy well-beloved Son, Jesus Christ, I bless Thee that Thou hast judged me worthy this day to drink the cup of Thy Christ, for the resurrection unto life eternal."† Ignatius, loaded with fetters, and brought from Smyrna to Rome, there to be delivered to the wild beasts, is in a rapture of joy at the thought of dying for Him who, to use his own expression, being "the King immortal, invisible," suffered all for us.‡ As he is about to go down into the arena, he triumphantly exclaims, "Welcome, sufferings, the rack and the cross, broken bones and violence of savage beasts, if I may but obtain Jesus Christ."§ Unhesitatingly he calls Jesus God; nor can this appear strange to us when we remember how Pliny, in his famous letter to Trajan written at this date, says that the Christians were accustomed to sing hymns to one Jesus as to their God.

The conquests of the Church widen. Illustrious teachers succeed to those apostolic fathers, who were nothing more than pious bishops. Christian teaching

* Clement ad Corinth., cap. ii.
† Acta Polyc., cap. xiv.
‡ Ignatius to Polycarp, i.
§ Ignatius ad Rom., cap. iv.

expresses the faith of simple hearts. If sometimes, carried away by an imprudent impulse, it loses itself for a moment in cloudy metaphysics, so soon as it touches earth again, it falls on its knees before the Crucified, to adore the Incarnate Word. From Justin to Clement of Alexandria, from Origen to Tertullian, this noble science, the inseparable sister of courageous faith, repeats with ever-growing force the words of the fisherman of Galilee, "Thou art the Christ of God." Most commonly the master seals his teaching with his blood. The first Christian philosopher, Justin, who nobly earned the glorious surname of Martyr, after having profoundly treated in his writings the doctrine of the Word, cast down his mantle before the tribunal which was to examine him before his torture, exclaiming "I am not worthy, O Christ, to say anything great of Thee." Origen, who had to subdue in himself the yearning for martyrdom, as others have to bring in subjection the passions of their youth, writes to those, more happy than himself, whose privilege it is thus to suffer,—"If a Christian is condemned simply as a Christian, and for no other reason, it is Jesus Christ who is condemned in his person: He is condemned wherever sentence of condemnation is passed for His name's sake. We have a High-priest, who, by the greatness of His power and wisdom, has passed into the heavens, Jesus the Son of God. 'Where I am,' He says, 'ye shall be also.' Hence our hope that, after all our sufferings and struggles, we too shall ascend far above all heavens."*

Do you ask whence he derived his theology? "I think," he says, "that there is a symbol in the fact that John leaned on the breast of Jesus. It signifies that, having given himself to the Eternal Word, he sank into its depths, and that he was in the bosom of the Word, as the Word was in the bosom of the Father.†" When Clement of Alexandria speaks of Jesus, his words

* Origen in Jeremias, Homily xiv. 8.
† Contra Cels., vii. 20.

have all the music of the grandest poetry. The language of Tertullian kindles at the mere mention of His name.

If, in objection to all this, we are reminded of the heresy so powerful at times in the early ages, sometimes denying the Divinity of Christ and representing Him as only the last of the prophets, sometimes depriving Him of his real humanity and substituting for the evangelical narrative all the phantasmagoria of Gnosticism, we simply reply, that in the day of battle the standard of the army must always be sought in the thickest of the fight, at the point of most sanguinary struggle. Now I ask, were they heretics who were thrown into dungeons, who suffered unto death? Was it heresy that gave to the Church her thousands of heroic confessors? Did not heresy, in aiming to destroy faith in Christ, quench that mighty love which alone is stronger than death? If the standard is torn and tattered, and dropping great drops of blood, bow before it. This is indeed the standard of the Church, and its bearers are the worshippers of Christ.

Follow the Christians throughout their renewed life, and you will see that their strength and heroism come from Him. Enter the home of the family purged from the stain of paganism; Jesus is the Master of the house. The days are spent under His eye, now in manual labour, from which the old reproach is lifted; now in holy intercourse and the sweet exchanges of mutual affection; the woman is raised into the wife and mother, the child no longer shrinks away from a cruel father; the slave lifts up his head, and calls himself "the Lord's free man;" every time bread is broken, they remember His broken body. Look again into that retired spot in which the Church observes her worship: it is the first hour of day; listen to those prayers (some fragments of which have come down to us), those hymns which rise to heaven:— "We praise Thee, we bless Thee, we worship Thee, we glorify Thee, we give thanks to Thee for Thy great glory,

O Lord God, heavenly King, God the Father Almighty; O Lord the only-begotten Son, Jesus Christ, O Lord God, Lamb of God, Son of the Father, that takest away the sins of the world, have mercy upon us."* The catechumens in white robes, the penitents who stand on the threshold of the house of prayer and smite on their breasts, the confirmed Christians, all call upon His name. When the offering of love has been placed upon the eucharistic table, the symbolic bread and the cup of the new covenant pass from hand to hand. Then it seems as though the alabaster box were afresh broken over the feet of Jesus. Adoration swells into a sacred stream, in one of those offices of worship which present to God all thanksgivings, all supplications, upborne on the unutterable sighings of the Christian soul. Again prison walls have closed in upon a faithful disciple. The prisoner is an old man, or a young mother, or a frail girl. Offer, to any one of them, all the thrones of the world as the price of the denial of Christ: with one of their number, they all answer, "We will follow the Lamb whithersoever He leadeth us." They have but one reply to make to the proconsul who examines them, "I am a Christian." They are thrown to the lions, and they die, like Stephen, gazing with beaming eyes into the opened heaven, where they see Jesus. Go down again into the bowels of the earth, into those dark caverns where they bury by night the ashes of their martyrs, those catacombs where the Church of the confessors lives again. There on the sombre stone are inscribed, in expressive symbolism, the Church's most cherished thoughts: here is the figure of the Good Shepherd, with an eye of heavenly love, seeking His lost sheep; there is the Babylonian furnace, into the midst of which the three young Hebrews are cast, but the flame does not kindle upon them, because by their side is the Son of God. "We also," seems the language of those persecuted saints, "We also are in

* Liturgy of the Church of Alexandria in the second century.

the fire seven times heated, but He is with us and we fear no evil." "Thou art the Christ of God." It is the voice of the third century, as of the first.

Between the fourth century and the middle ages we have a period in which the testimony is more precise, but less powerful, because less free. The union with the empire is fatal to the Church; it lowers her dignity, and opens the door to unconverted multitudes. Let us however not exaggerate even here. It was not the patronage of the Emperors of Byzantium, which made Athanasius triumphant over Arius, since Arius stood for a longer time than he in the imperial favour. Beneath the barrenness of a system of elaborate metaphysics, the soundness of which we by no means contend for, we still find faithful love to Jesus. The Christian heart yet beats beneath this cold and crushing weight of armour. Above councils and their authoritative decisions, its voice is heard in the Chrysostoms and St. Augustines, the Jeromes and the Basils; and its language is still, as in the days of old, "Thou art the Christ of God."

The middle ages, with all the barbarism and ignorance of their darkest period, yet know one thing, that Jesus is the Redeemer of the world. Undeniably they set up on the throne beside Him the power of the hierarchy, and bow before the creature deified, whether that divinity be the pope, regarded as the very voice of God, or whether a sort of Christian Olympus be created, peopled with various gods under the name of saints. But, in spite of all superstitions, hearts remain faithful to the immortal belief of the Church. It is the Church which, influencing with a mistaken zeal half barbarous races, precipitates Europe upon Asia for the conquest of an empty tomb. But do we ask where this rough and barbaric age has left the most faithful impress of its thought? The answer is, in the cathedral. The twelfth and thirteenth centuries therein expressed all their poetry, their visions, their hopes. The work of an entire people, the cathedral is the noble symbol of a

people's faith. These stones speak with a voice of incomparable eloquence. Disposed in the form of a cross, they tell the world that there is no glory like that of the accursed tree on which the Holy Victim died. The soul is conscious of a boundless exultation beneath those high-arching domes; the spire seems to rise from the choir to heaven, uplifted on the voice of chant and prayer. The cathedral is, to the man of the middle ages, the image of the world renewed by Christ, and being lifted up to God by a grand impulse springing from the cross. The worship celebrated within the cathedral is no longer worship in spirit and in truth; it is overladen with errors, the gravest of which is the daily renewal of a material sacrifice, as if the Saviour had not said "It is finished": but let us not therefore forget that it does represent day by day the drama of redemption. A deep and sacred tone thrills often through those old hymns, never yet surpassed.

Again, side by side with the great works of scholasticism,—those ponderous calculations which are like the cathedrals of Christian metaphysics,—we find honey hidden in the rock, in the effusions of the mystics. I need only refer to that book, so dear to the Church in all ages, which might have been written by Mary of Bethany seated at the feet of Jesus, "The Imitation of Christ," in which the narrow cell of the monk is indeed sometimes visible, but with so wide an opening towards heaven, and so radiant with the glories of holy love, that we are ever fain to return to it, to learn something of that austerity blended with tenderness, of which in our busy and superficial days we know so little.

Think not, my brethren, that these grand features of the middle ages make me unjust to our glorious Reformation. This I hail as the dawn after the darkness. For all the starry splendours of the night, do we not join with all creation to bless the break of day? And the day which then began was not the day of liberty alone, but also of a purer and more powerful faith. To

pretend that the Reformation confined itself to preaching the right of free examination, is simply to set aside the reformers altogether, to shut our eyes to their books open before us, to ignore their powerful words, their yet more powerful deeds, and the confessions by them inspired; it is to forget altogether all that they were and all that they desired to be. They built, like their forerunners, on the ancient Rock of offence. Had they pleaded only for freedom of thought, they would have done no more to renew society than the Renaissance had done. Their originality, no less than their power, springs from the fruitful connection of faith with free inquiry. To separate what in them was indissolubly united is to mutilate their work, and to substitute idle inventions for the great realities of history. If once more our opponents urge against us those tendencies which, springing historically from the Reformation, have falsified its firm beliefs, we ask again where is the standard of the army, not that which displays its brilliant colours at academic fêtes, but that torn and scarred banner which bears the traces of heroic fight? In the sixteenth century, is it to be found with the *beaux esprits* who see in the Reformation only a convenient emancipation? or is it rather with that legion of martyrs who meet death with the name of Christ upon their lips? In the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, is it with the deists of England and of Germany? or is it with the sufferers under the persecutions of the Stuarts and of Louis XIV.? Does it not float from the vessel which goes to land on the rock of Plymouth pilgrims, the glorious ancestors of the first Christian democracy the world has known? Is it not in the hands of all those exiles, of whom France then was not worthy, who forsook, for their faith, country and goods, if they escaped the sabre of the dragoons, and did not sink under the estrapade, or die in the garb of the galley slave? Shall we find the banner of the Reformation in the hands of a Reimarius, a sceptic in private while strictly orthodox in public, preparing in secret and in

silence for the day of open rationalism? or shall we seek it rather in the desert, where in an age which had lost faith in God our fathers worshipped amid peril and reproach. Yes, ancient standard of the Church of the catacombs, I know and hail thee still; on thee I still read the watchword of the everlasting gospel. Still thou art lifted high above the tumult of opinions: decried and insulted thou art, as thou hast ever been; but every deed of heroism done in the Church is done beneath thy shadow. When a missionary sets forth to carry his faith to a distant shore, at the cost of all privation and peril, he bears thee in his hand. The grand apostolic tradition hovers above all our strife and debate. From all the Churches in old Europe and young America comes forth Christianity, the true heir of the ages; and prostrate at the feet of Jesus it pours with Peter its confession, "Thou art the Christ of God."

I go further, my brethren. I fully believe that, in the ranks of those who do not accept in theory the faith of the universal Church, and who, influenced by the spirit of system, deny to Jesus His high and supreme dignity, there are some who adore Him, who love Him as we love, and who, like Channing, are carried by the impulse of the soul infinitely beyond the narrow limits in which they are held by prejudice. The cloud which enshrouds them does not cut them off from participation in the life of Jesus. By an inconsistency, which we deplore, they will not drink the water which quenches their thirst till it has reached the lower slopes of the mountain; they refuse to rise in thought to the rocky summit whence it springs. That soaring peak is the very doctrine which terrifies them; and yet, without that soaring summit where the healing waters gather, the plain would be a desert. Therefore their error is great; never will they found a true Christian Church on these conditions. But in feeling they accept what in theory they deny, and unconsciously they too exclaim in their manner, "Thou art the Christ of God." Nevertheless, it remains true that

if the testimony of the Church had been as illogical and indistinct as theirs, the Church would long ago have ceased to be.

From all these considerations, are we not justified in taking up to-day the noble strain of the Te Deum,—

"The glorious company of the apostles—Praise Thee,
The goodly fellowship of the prophets—Praise Thee;
The noble army of martyrs—Praise Thee;
The holy Church throughout all the world—Doth acknowledge Thee;
* * * *
Thou art the King of glory, O Christ"?

And now, my brethren, I turn from the annals of the past. I address myself no longer to the great tradition of the Church universal. I invoke no more the voice of the ages. No, I suppose that we know nothing of this great cloud of witnesses. Using the language of Tertullian, I now address myself to thee, O Christian soul, not as thou art when polished in academies, nourished for long years with sacred literature, enriched with religious knowledge; I take thee as thou art, before all this culture, rude, simple, unbiassed; I take thee from the midst of those classes of the people upon whom the burden of life presses most heavily; I take thee in the deserts of Africa, or in the islands of the distant sea, and I ask thee, "Who, sayest thou, was Christ? Answer as if thou wert alone in the wide universe; say what He has done for thee." "I was going astray," replies the humble Christian; "I was walking in the night, sold under sin, drinking iniquity like water, seeing indeed sometimes a lightning flash cleaving the thick darkness, and showing me that beyond the present life there is another world and a God to be my Judge; hearing, in some hour of silence, a sad and secret voice reproach me for my guilty life. I used to feel within myself great aspirations, a thirst for the infinite, that nothing quenched. But I went where my heart led, rattling my chains but never breaking them, fluctuating between the fever of

sinful desire and the fear of the unknown. One day—blessed among all days—I met Him, that compassionate Saviour; I saw Him with the eye of the soul. Till then, I had heard of Him with the hearing of the ear, but I had not heard Himself. The thick veil fell from my eyes. I saw Him as the publicans of Galilee saw Him, and the sinners of Jerusalem. It was indeed He, the Man of sorrows, His brow pale with suffering, and yet full of the power of God. In His aspect holiness shone unsullied, and love knew no bounds; His glance fell on me like a flame of fire, it melted the ice of my insensibility. I understood, I sounded the depths of my sin; my tears flowed like those of the faithless disciple. I fell at His feet, overwhelmed and yet full of hope; and then I heard in the depths of my heart His voice, saying, 'My son, go in peace; thy sins are forgiven thee.' It seemed to me as if heaven opened; all things became new, and with weeping eyes, but a heart flooded with heavenly joy, I cried, 'Thou art the Christ of God.' Yes, it is He, I know it beyond a doubt. It is He, for never has He failed me since that hour. He has been to me, the frail bough broken by the wind, as the Divine Branch, giving sap, life, fruitfulness. Through Him I have found the Father, and have had communion with Him. He is in me, and I in Him for ever. This close and sacred union is at once the great mystery and the great reality of my soul's life. Through Him my prayer goes up to heaven, and is accepted. In the day of affliction He has come under my roof, and with a voice of gentle authority I have heard Him say, 'I am the resurrection and the life; believe only, and thou shalt see the glory of God.' He is my comfort in sorrow, my strength in temptation; He will be my victory in death; and all eternity is illuminated for me by this promise, 'Where I am, there ye shall be also.' Peter was not deceived when he said, 'Thou art the Christ of God.'"

But thou knowest not then, Christian soul, that thy right to raise so high the name of the Crucified is disputed?

There is a so-called science, which claims to sit upon a lofty tribunal, from which by the aid of pure criticism it may pronounce final sentence upon the true or false. It cites thee to its bar, as once the man born blind, who had been healed by Jesus, was cited at Jerusalem. It will not admit the reality of thy cure any more than of his. Listen; perhaps it may confound thine ignorance. "What!" it cries, "miserable creature, dost thou pretend that for thee God has been able to suspend the inflexible laws of creation? Dost thou not know that the supernatural is impossible? that it is incompatible with the wisdom of the Most High? Observe the invariable order of creation, and sink into thine own nothingness." "I know not," replies the Christian soul, "what all these great words mean. One thing I know, that the invariable order of causes and effects would have led me to perdition, if God had not had pity on me and arrested the consequences of my sin. I know that He has stretched out His hand, and lifted me up. I believe in a miracle, for I am the living proof of one." "Dost thou not know," rejoins sceptical science, "that this book, which thou believest to be Divine, is but a compilation of uncertain date?" "One thing I know, that I was blind and it has given me sight, since it has made me know the sovereign word which speaks and there is light." "Knowest thou not that we have reduced the Christ to reasonable proportions? Speak no more of His Divinity." "One thing I know, that my knees have bowed spontaneously before His almighty love, and that seeing and hearing I could not but worship Him."

"Dost thou not know that thou art in error in proclaiming Him to be holy, for perfect holiness is not of this world? We do not say, like the judges at Jerusalem, that He is a sinner; for we have learned the art of fine distinctions. No, we say only that He was not perfectly sincere, that He used guile to gain His disciples, that He showed Himself sometimes hard, implacable, fanatic. Observe in Him that mixture of good and evil

which is essential in human nature, since evil is a necessity and is the condition of human development. Speak not then of His spotless holiness." "Silence, base judges!" cries the chafed and indignant conscience: "Evil is not what you say; I appeal in proof to my misery and to my terror. You are public corrupters, when you attack the indefeasible law written in my nature. Your wretched chicaneries and covert inuendoes shall not prevent me from seeing in Jesus the perfect realization of my ideal, and a realization passing the ideal. He is the Holy One of God. He has but to manifest Himself to me, and the sin and shame of humanity stand revealed by His very presence, and I thrill with sacred joy before a holiness so pure and radiant. Say what you will, heap up objections and revilings; one thing I know, that I, a poor sentenced sinner, was dead, and now I live, and I live through Him. Therefore, in tones louder than yours my voice shall cry again, 'Thou art the Christ of God.'"

Faithful souls, be not deceived by vain assumptions. It is not true that the science which condemns you is, as it pretends, sole science worthy of the name. No, in opposition to it there has been in every age a Christian science, which has confirmed your own testimony. In bringing before you to-day the great tradition of the universal Church, we have let you hear some of its noble organs. It is still as sublime as ever in our day, in breadth of labours and in intellectual prowess. And what is, in truth, the task of Christian science, if not to endeavour to give us an account of spiritual facts, which it has not originated, but which it seeks to verify? "Flesh and blood hath not revealed these things unto thee, but my Father which is in heaven," said Jesus to Peter, after receiving his noble testimony. In other words, it is not in nature to bring us to this saving faith. The supernatural leads to the supernatural; it is at once the way and the end, "the truth and the life." Faith in Christ springs from the

direct contact of the soul with Him, under the influence of the Divine Spirit, which is refused to none who ask it. Therefore, whether learned or unlearned, we are all alike bound to use this sovereign method to find the truth, seeking from God the illumination of the heart. There is then no reason to be astonished at the beautiful harmony we have observed, between Christian science and the humble faith that knows nothing of the history of the Church.

Permit me, in conclusion, my brethren, to show you this harmony perfectly realized in a man who was one of the most illustrious thinkers of the modern world and one of the most fervent believers. I refer to the great Pascal. His was, as you know, one of those royal intellects in which genius fructifies knowledge; all that philosophy could teach he knew; he placed at the service of the gospel those keen and fervid dialectic powers which give to argument the brilliance and fire of great poetry. If you ask whence he derived his Christian belief, you will speedily discover as the basis of his profound convictions an inward experience, the same experience upon which, from the days of Peter to our own day, faith has rested. He also found Jesus in the midst of the path of life. He did not, like the son of Jonas, meet Him on the shores of a lake, where the fishing boats and the dripping nets still betokened the humble calling and bespoke the unlettered man; it was in the philosopher's study, in the depth of the night watches, that he heard the great call of the Master. Listen to his own testimony.

"*The year of grace* 1654, *Monday, November* 22*nd, from half-past ten at night to about half an hour after midnight*:—

"'Be comforted,' said Jesus uplifted on the cross, 'thou wouldst not be seeking Me if thou hadst not found Me. I thought of thee in Mine agony; I shed drops of blood for thee. Wilt thou that the blood of My humanity must ever flow for thee, while thou shalt shed

no tear? . . . . . Physicians cannot heal thee, for thou wilt die at last. But I will heal thee, and make thy body immortal. If thou knewest thy sins, thou wouldst lose heart.'

"'I lose it then, Lord; for on Thy word I believe their vileness.'

"'Nay, for I who teach thee this can heal thee of thy sins.'

"'Lord, I give them all to Thee.'

"'I love thee more fervently than thou hast loved thy sins; let the glory be to Me, not to thee, worm of the earth.'

"'Jesus Christ! Jesus Christ! I have separated myself from Him, have fled Him, renounced Him, crucified Him. Let me never be separated from Him, God of Abraham, God of Isaac, God of Jacob, not of the philosophers and wise men. Assurance, Assurance! Love! Joy! Peace. God of Jesus Christ!'

"'*Deum meum et Deum vestrum.* Thy God shall be my God.'"

Deem not that the great thinker, the illustrious philosopher, loses anything of his intellectual genius from this day. On the contrary, the wings of the eagle, which soar to the sun, now sustain his reasoning powers, and his knowledge will not lose itself in vagueness. Faith has given it its object; and the more faith reigns, the more will it be demonstrated that the "foolishness of God is wiser than man." Let it not then be pretended that we plead the cause of ignorance against that of knowledge. We affirm only—and this is the substance of our whole discourse—that this Divine folly of the God-man was not produced from the crucibles of human science, and cannot in them be reduced again to nought, that it is itself the revelation, the treasure of the universal Church, and that when we defend it we are not seeking to guard a doubtful conclusion of theology, but the most precious possession of our souls, the foundation stone of the building, and not the capital of one of its columns.

This is all our hope and all our salvation; therefore, without acrimony, but with an unmovable resolution, we say, *We will hold it fast.*

We will preserve for ourselves and for our children, not a certain tradition, a certain theology, a certain confession of faith, but the Christian religion itself and the imperishable symbol of the apostolic faith. For this, our heritage, we will earnestly contend. And we pray Thee, O Jesus, the ever-living One, who art the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever, to manifest Thyself with power in our hearts and lives, so that our adversaries themselves may be convinced by such a transformation, and may exclaim, "Verily, He who has so magnified strength in weakness is the Christ of God." Oh that the great apology of holiness may bring a truce to disputes often so irritating and so unworthy, and that a truly apostolic life may plead effectually for the faith of the apostles!

The Sins of Religious Speech.

THE SINS OF RELIGIOUS SPEECH.*

"Wherefore, my beloved brethren, let every man be swift to hear, slow to speak, slow to wrath; for the wrath of man worketh not the righteousness of God."—JAMES i. 19, 20.

IF we look back to the circumstances under which the Epistle of James was written, we shall see how admirably it is adapted to the needs of the Church, in those periods of inward crisis so frequent in her history. And after all, what is her history but one great crisis, one long struggle, one laborious striving to overcome evil and error without and within? But there are particular crises, in addition to this general crisis, times when questions of gravest moment press for a decision, when minds are divided and paths diverge, when difficulties multiply as the mission of the Church extends. Such was that period of the apostolic age when this letter was written, which breathes a moral atmosphere so strong and healthy, and is expressed in language so fresh and telling. The time was past when in one upper chamber the whole of the primitive Church assembled, and all hearts joined in the same adoration, and shared in common both thoughts and goods. This ideal scene, with which the story of the Church opens, had quickly disappeared, like the Eden from the commencement of the world's history. At the time at which the Epistle of James was written, about the year 65, the Church was not only engaged in a formidable warfare with the world, she was also the prey of sharp internal dissensions. Although the apostles had given to each other the

* Preached at Geneva, on the occasion of the great Evangelical Alliance Conferences, September, 1861.

right hand of fellowship, there was a division between the adherents of Judaizing Christianity, who desired to perpetuate all the institutions of the old covenant, and the Christians, delivered from the Mosaic yoke, who declared with Paul that the law of the Spirit had taken the place of the law of the letter, and that in Christ Jesus there was neither Jew nor Greek. All the questions standing in relation to the two covenants were under discussion; exaggeration was often met by exaggeration, especially in the Churches of Palestine. There was a confused and discordant medley; sharp voices were raised in altercation. The sound of mutual condemnation waxed long and loud; and the still small voice, which marks the presence of the Lord, was well nigh drowned in the tumult.

It was then that "James the Lord's brother" addressed to the Churches this solemn warning: "Let every man be swift to hear, slow to speak, slow to wrath." Let us receive the injunction with all respect, for it concerns us also. Nothing is more opportune to the Church of our day, in the crisis through which she is passing in this the second stage of her awakening, when the unanimity of the first days is over, and the air is stirred with many questionings—questionings inevitable indeed, but perilous. I bless God from my heart for these festivals of brotherly love, in which we are now rejoicing together; but let them not mislead us. The evangelical Church is celebrating here one of those blessed sabbaths which break the weeks of toil; but labour and struggle will begin again on the morrow. We are not met to give summary or impulsive decisions on the great questions given by God Himself, to be solved by the Church of to-day; we are met on the ground of love and of liberty. Thank God, this is no council, authoritatively imposing hasty decretals. Not one of us renounces either his own individuality, or that of his Church. The crisis of the day will not therefore be over, when these Christian assemblies are dispersed. In this respect, we shall be

to-morrow as we were yesterday. The best means of rendering these gatherings practically useful is to employ them as days of preparation for the more Christian discharge of our daily task. Good Sundays make good weeks. May this sabbath season—if I may so call it—make us stronger to withstand the sin, which comes to empoison all our labours and all our debates! On the Mount of Transfiguration Jesus talked with the blessed ones who came down from heaven to hold converse with Him, of the "decease which he should accomplish at Jerusalem." Let us, upon these sacred heights where our secondary differences sink out of sight, converse of the earnest duties which will await us when we go down again into the plain, and the dust of the way, now shaken off for a moment, gathers afresh upon our feet. What it concerns us to do is not to set up a tabernacle upon the holy hill—nay, this is forbidden; but to descend from it with hearts renewed and sanctified. Oh that to-day I might speak to you a word in season! I ask it of God.

"Let every man be swift to hear, slow to speak."

This exhortation may apply to our relation to God. When God speaks, what shall man do but listen? Now God has spoken. His word has in it this unique and truly Divine element, that it is itself living, and communicates life; it is essentially a creative word. "He hath begotten us again by the word of truth," says the sacred writer. Twice God has sent forth His voice, and that a mighty voice, into time and space: His first utterance was the word of creation, His second the word of redemption; let us rather say it was the Redeemer Himself, for He is the very Word of God, the uncreated Word, the only and well-beloved Son of the Father, who "dwelt among us, full of grace and truth," and has procured for us pardon and holiness, that is eternal life, by the sacrifice of Himself. God has spoken by Him, and this word of reconciliation is heard perpetually in our midst, speaking in the book which is our Divine treasury,

speaking in hearts and consciences by the invisible and almighty Preacher given at Pentecost.

Thus then God is speaking to you: "be swift to hear." His is the voice you need to hear, not man's; it is He alone who quickens and creates; it is He who says, "Let there be light;" and there is light; it is He who raises the dead. Human words can do them honour by the eloquent epitaph on the tombstone; but it is only at the voice of God that Lazarus comes forth. Listen then to Him who speaks from heaven, and by whose word you are born again unto a life eternal. Listen on your knees, as to a God; listen with heart and conscience. Be slow to speak, to answer Him with vain arguments, which cover a rebellious spirit. He made your heart upright; that heart speaks for Him, and bids you seek Him. We believe firmly in the witness of conscience, as naturally Christian. Seek not many words; do not refine away, do not resist. What interest have you in falsifying this Divine message? It is summed up in two words,—pardon, and holiness; or more truly still in one, the most beautiful, the sweetest of words—love. The gospel, the word of eternal love, tells you that you can recover all you have lost. And yet myriads of mankind set themselves desperately against it. Where are the sentenced criminals who, when the letter of reprieve is brought them, endeavour to find some flaw in it, so as to prove it invalid? And when you have convinced yourselves, by force of sophisms, that the gospel is false, what will you have gained but the fatal conviction that there is no pardon, no heaven, no Saviour, no reconciled God? And yet this is the result, in which vainly and presumptuously the man of reason triumphs. Ah, shall we not say, in the energetic language of Pascal, "Silence, proud and infatuated reason! silence when God speaks"? Thou hast discovered nothing, after ages of rebellion, but that which is contradictory and heart-rending. Thou art still worshipping at thine old shrine of nature, deified in her mysterious forces. Thou hast spoken enough against

God. Listen, listen to Him whose voice thou hast stifled; and thou wilt soon find that the folly of the cross, if it be the highest folly, is also the highest and the only consoling wisdom. Nay, more; thou wilt own that it bears the semblance of folly only because it presents infinite love to beings finite in heart and spirit.

"God of truth, before Thy face
All Thy creatures bow;
Bending from Thy holy place,
Let the accents of Thy grace
Reach our spirits now."

But man lives not only in the presence of God; he lives also in presence of his brother man. Mankind forms a vast society, of which language is the outward bond. Our text applies no less to these human relations; indeed this is its first application in the mind of the writer, as is proved by that which follows; "let every man be swift to hear, slow to speak, slow to wrath; for the wrath of man worketh not the righteousness of God." Here the reference is clearly to the wrath of man with man, and to the ill feelings betrayed by an angry word. The meaning of these words can be yet more strictly defined. The writer has not at the moment in view all the sins of the tongue indiscriminately; to these he will subsequently refer with singular power: but he is not in the text reproving impure, false, reviling words, or bad language in general; he is referring specially to the weapons of religious warfare, the speech used to defend the cause of God, and which, in spite of its right end, is animated by a wrong spirit. "The wrath of man," he says, worketh not the righteousness of God." St. James evidently supposes that this wrath disguises itself as jealousy for God. You see then that he is speaking of the sins of which we may be guilty in our religious speech, and it is in this sense we must consider his injunction, "Let every man be slow to speak."

What does this mean, my brethren? Does the sacred writer despise speech in itself? That cannot be. It is

the faculty by which we are distinguished from the lower creatures, the dumb animals. Speech is, as it were, the mediator between the material and the spiritual world; it borrows from the former its most ethereal, most subtle elements, a breath, a sound; it receives from the latter thought and feeling, that is, light and flame; it is the winged messenger of souls and spirits. Great is its vocation in the plan of God. On the one hand, its mission is to lift to Him the homage of all created beings; on the other, it has to transmit His thoughts and His will to His free and intelligent creatures.

It is by man, and by the life of man, that the world in a peculiar manner presents its adoration to the Creator. I know indeed that, as the psalmist says, "the heavens declare the glory of God, and the firmament showeth his handiwork;" that "day unto day uttereth speech, and night unto night showeth knowledge;" and that, without a living voice, their words are yet "heard unto the ends of the world." Who has not listened to this praise ascending from nature to her God, as he has stood under the majestic silence of the starry heavens, that alpine silence, so deep, so grave, so holy? Who has not heard a hymn in the murmur of creation? The voice of the floods, the winds swaying the sonorous trees, the solemn swellings of the thunder—all speak of God. But if I have heard this voice of nature, I have also heard that aspiration, that sigh caught by St. Paul when he said, "For the whole creation groaneth and travaileth together until now. . . . For the earnest expectation of the creature waiteth for the manifestation of the sons of God." Yes, before the creation of man, the creatures sighed after him; the world was incomplete. The temple had been built, but the priest had not lifted up his voice within its sacred precincts. The word of love had fallen from heaven, and there was no answer. All was accomplished when the sons of God were manifested, that is, when the intelligent and free creature lifted a loving gaze to heaven, and his heart sent up its incense of adoration.

Then upon the young world, perfect at length, came down the benediction of the seventh day. And now again all creation is sighing and earnestly expecting the manifestation of the sons of God. From this earth, redeemed and purified by the blood of Christ, must rise the voice of prayer, the hosannah of worship. To the carol of the angels, "Peace on earth," there must be an answer from earth itself. A mysterious sympathy links us with nature; it quivers with holy expectation; it groans with us, and cannot be satisfied, in other words, it has not fulfilled its calling, till the incense rises again from the altar of our hearts, and the prayer of the children of God bears to the Most High the homage of all creatures. Therefore I take up the language of the psalmist, and say, "Bless the Lord, all his works, in all places of his dominions." And again, "Praise him, sun and moon; praise him, all ye stars of light; fire and hail, snow and vapour, stormy wind fulfilling his word; mountains and all hills, fruitful trees and all cedars, pastures clothed with flocks, valleys covered over with corn, let them shout for joy, let them also sing," blessing the Lord. But more than all, thou, O my soul, bless thou the Lord; and remember that so long as thou dost not bless Him, this general inarticulate voice of nature does not become the prayer after which creation sighs, and which God awaits.

Be not slow to speak, when the voice is the voice of praise. Be not slow to speak, when songs of adoration may drown the sound of blasphemy and scorn. To give in our worship and in our Christian life a larger part to adoration is one of the most legitimate desires of the Christian Church.

Neither let us be slow to speak the word of witness. We have not only to present to God the homage of creation; we have also to convey to intelligent creatures His mind and will; and we thus fulfil, in a measure, the office of the eternal Word, who is the express image of His person. In this work He deigned to associate us with

Himself when He said to all His disciples, "Ye shall be witnesses unto me."

What a noble calling is that of the witness of the truth, the faithful apostle! We cannot but admire the power of human speech when, even in the service of a lower cause, it bows a whole assembly like a field of corn, and carries hearts along like rivers of water with the force of an irresistible current. How grand an instrument then must human speech be, when employed in the service of truth, the noblest of all causes! How impressive when, scorning alike the unworthy aid of mere rhetorical ornament and of material support, making its appeal only to the highest emotions, and reprobating all the evil and the low, Christian testimony advances victoriously in spite of hindrance and resistance, by the pure moral might of the world of spirit, spreading life and salvation along all its course, and leaving a track of light for following generations. Such was the true dignity claimed by Christ before the proconsul, when, with the crown of thorns upon His brow, He said, "Thou sayest that I am a king. To this end was I born, and for this cause came I into the world, that I should bear witness to the truth." The badge of this Christian kinghood is indeed most often a robe dyed purple in the martyr's blood; but it is not therefore the less powerful in the world for the honour of humanity, though it may be received at first with scorn. See the apostle starting for the conquest of the world, and seek in history for an example of grander heroism! He has against him all the combined forces of the world's greatest empire, disciplined legions and tumultuous crowds, the high and the low, the princes of the material and of the spiritual world. The Roman colossus, enriched with the spoils of the whole earth, rears itself to its full height to withstand him, and he has not even the sling of the shepherd of Bethlehem in his hand. He has no weapon but his word; but it is the word on which he lives, for which he is ready to die; and this word will

sink deep into the forehead of the giant of ancient paganism; it will overthrow all obstacles, will blunt all swords, and echo among the ruins of a corrupt world—the *fiat lux* of a new creation. Heroes like the apostle were our glorious reformers. They came forth, one from the cell of the monk, another from the room of the student, all from the midst of poverty and weakness, to fight with all that seemed lofty and grand; but they had the apostolic message on their lips and the apostolic faith in their hearts. And three centuries after their work is done, behold its fruit even here! And such witnesses should we be, if we had also in our hearts the same word, the same gospel, the same love, the same zeal; this scoffing, callous age would learn that truth has lost none of the vitality of its youth, that it is able still to overturn and renovate a world. "Would to God that all the Lord's people were prophets!" Would to God that you all fulfilled your mission, O witnesses of Christ! Be not "slow to speak" till the knowledge of the Lord shall have covered the earth as the waters cover the sea.

In what sense then does the sacred writer exhort us to be "slow to speak"? Knowing the human heart and its devices, he knows that it is possible to do the best works, and speak the best words, in a wrong spirit. St. Paul has already said that he might speak with the tongue of angels, and yet be only as sounding brass and a tinkling cymbal. Now, as there is no sin more dangerous than that which borrows a religious guise, it is of great moment that we should be on our guard against self-deception, especially in the performance of our holiest duties. St. James does not bid us be slow to speak in adoration and praise of our Saviour-God; he only charges us to examine well the spirit which actuates us, and to weigh our words, ay even those which appear right words, in the balance of a sensitive conscience; for these very words may be stained with sin in the eyes of Him who searches the hearts and reins. It remains for us to inquire briefly what it is which most frequently

turns aside our religious speech from its true aim, and makes it fail of its effect.

Above the laws which regulate the form of language and teach correctness and elegance, there are great ethical laws which determine its morality. These laws do not differ from those which govern the life itself, as a whole. Everything within us belongs to God by a double right: He has created, He has saved; He has, as St. James says, "of his own will begotten us with the word of truth, that we should be a kind of first-fruits of his creatures." Thus our vocation as men and as Christians is to give ourselves without reserve to Him, to love Him with all our soul and mind and strength. "This is the first and great commandment, and the second is like unto it—thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself." To live not to ourselves, but to God and our neighbour, this is the key, the secret of life. Now everything within us should bear this seal of sacrifice, of the complete surrender of ourselves. It follows that speech is only truly Christian when it is animated by this spirit of love, when it rises up and flows forth from a heart impregnated with love. Whatever may be the beauty of the form it wears, and the truth of the thoughts it expresses, it is guilty before God, if it is not inspired and influenced by a holy love. Let us try our religious language by this standard.

We have already drawn a distinction between words of adoration and words of witness. It is certain that in reference to the former it is one of our first duties to give solemn expression to our secret piety, by taking our part in the worship of the Church. But let us not rest satisfied here with mere forms. It matters not so much that the words chosen be beautiful, that the gestures be many and becoming, as that the feeling be true and the expression of the lips be the real offering of the heart. Though we should "bow down our head like a bulrush," though we should rend our garments as we recited the touching confessions of the penitential psalms, yet if our

heart was not in the worship, we should but have enacted a solemn lie, and our service would be nothing better than sacrilege. The kingdom of God consists not in word but in spirit. When love is in the soul, it is good that it should find utterance in words; but words can never be a substitute for love. Nothing is more fatal to true religion than a want of harmony between the form and the substance, between feeling and expression; there is no greater perversion of the power of speech, which was intended to manifest our inner life, not to disguise and stifle it. Self-deception is the fatal result of insincerity of expression: "we have a name to live while we are dead," and this vain show of life deadens our conscience. Life slips away under these delusive appearances; there is the rind of the fruit, but within only the bitterness of decay. The moral life is dissipated in words—words which are but a mockery and offence to God, since it is insulting to Him to suppose that He can be satisfied with a homage which is merely of the lip. It is of such service He cries, "I am weary to bear it," "I hate your solemn assemblies." O my brethren, be then "slow to speak;" be scrupulous that is, in not letting the profession of your piety go beyond your real feelings; aim to be always sincere with yourselves. Fear latent hypocrisy, unconscious falsehood. To express that which you do not feel is not only to exaggerate the measure of your emotions, it is also to chill and wither up the little moral life left within you. It is a terrible fact, that fictitious religion and nominal Christianity make even more victims than avowed infidelity. Unreality in religion is destroying us; nominal Christians are making shipwreck of the Church, and they themselves will be the first to perish. With nothing more than a phantom Christianity, they dare to encounter the most terrible realities. Oh beware; examine your own selves. Be not called Christians, if you are not Christians in deed and in truth. It is not a tradition, a name, a form, a sacrament, a shibboleth that will save you; it is faith,

living and personal faith, faith which worketh by love. Have you this? Then express it by taking part in the worship of the Church, in the sacrament, in the adoration of the children of God. But if you have it not, all is false, all is vain in your profession, and, borrowing with another reference the words of Peter, we will say to you, "O thou who art not born anew and yet callest thyself a Christian, *thou hast not lied unto men, but unto God.*"

If from the language of adoration we pass to that of witness, we shall perceive that in the fulfilment of this obligation we are under temptation not less dangerous. Let us examine well what is the motive which impels us to bear our testimony. Is it obedience to the love of souls, or to the love of our own glory? The love of praise finds an easy entrance into the heart, and alas it takes up its abode in its most secret depths. Thus there is often a proud self-satisfaction in speaking of the inner life, in bringing to light the most excellent gifts and graces received. I know that the poor sinner, who like Philip, or like the woman of Samaria, has met the Saviour by the way, cannot but cry, "I have found Him," and urge his brethren to follow him to the feet of Christ. But even one who has given this spontaneous testimony to the gospel, may be led on to bring himself forward unwisely, and to deck himself with the gifts of God as with jewels. Be then "slow to speak" of yourselves. Remember that the *Ego*, however hateful to others, appears always amiable to the proud heart of man. The soul has her modesty; let her cherish it! It is into the wilderness God has said He will lead her, to reveal to her His love. Do not profane the inner sanctuary. Be on your watch against the epidemic of exhibition, and of religious exhibition, which is so much the spirit of the day. Ripen in the shade the fruits of the Spirit, and leave your retirement only at the call of duty and devotion. Remember St. Paul, honoured with visions of the third heaven, yet keeping the secret, till bound in the interests of the gospel to reveal it to the Christians of Corinth,

and then doing so not without confusion. In our days there is reason to fear that had a Christian received so signal an honour, he would have made every platform echo with the tale.

Let every man be "slow to speak," even when apparently he is rendering the most disinterested testimony to the truth, if he is personally concerned in it. Let the witnesses of the truth, called to stand forth conspicuously before their fellow-men, tremble at the thought of their responsibility. If they are not true witnesses, they are what? Comedians, who have put on a tragic mask, and who, while they are denouncing the judgments of God, are thinking only of the praise of men. It needs but small temptation, under such circumstances, to make them pander to those whose favour they court. They lose both dignity and power, and finally they lose their souls. Oh let us take heed, lest having preached to others we ourselves should be found castaways! O God, have mercy on us, and touch our hearts and lips with the live coal of a truly apostolic word!

"Let every man be slow to speak, and *slow to wrath*," adds the sacred writer. There is a close connection between the two ideas. In fact, as soon as our religious speech ceases to be animated and inspired by love, it quickly becomes disputatious. Weak and limited as we are in thought, and liable to error, we each hold but a portion of the truth. Hence the diversity of our opinions; hence our frequent and even necessary discussions; hence the struggles with declared error, or manifest heresy; hence the controversies with our brethren, on points secondary indeed, but not unimportant. If we are really disinterested witnesses of truth, these discussions will be animated, but they will not be stormy. Forgetfulness of ourselves will preserve our serenity and moderation. Victorious, we shall not insolently parade our triumph; vanquished, we shall be grateful for a defeat, which will be the defeat of error within us. From the collision of ideas, without the concurrent presence of evil passions,

light alone will spring. It is otherwise, the moment we yield ourselves to the sway of pride or egotism: then it is no more the truth which we are maintaining, it is our own dogmatism, our own glory; it is our notion, and we defend it, not because it is true but because it is ours. We cling to it desperately, we contend for it with bitterness. Thenceforward nothing can come of the debate. One idea may yield to another, but pride never lays down its arms. Its resources are inexhaustible; for passion listens to nothing, it is a blind force which admits no evidence: thus its battles are at once endless and unavailing, violent and fruitless. It is impossible that light should be produced under such conditions. It would be a strange way of clearing the sky, to raise a cloud of dust by the impatient stamp of a foot upon the highway. Besides, even if one disputant should have doctrinal truth on his side, he would be no less in the wrong, while the heart was filled with anger and hatred. How should it be otherwise? Truth is not in its essence an idea, an abstraction; it is a living reality: truth is God, and God is love. In yielding to passion, we forsake the region of light, we fall into darkness. We cannot but be in absolute darkness, while under the dominion of hatred; and if in the midst of that thick darkness we grasp some dry skeleton of dogmatic truth, we have not the living truth, we have at most but its cold shadow. "He who hateth his brother is in darkness." With wrath begins the dark kingdom of evil. The devils believe and hate; hatred with knowledge—this is hell. Anger is the fire of Gehenna. Those whom it consumes have no relation with that living truth which we adore in God, though they may have subscribed to the most orthodox formularies. They are in practical error, which is a more serious thing than being in abstract error.

But I anticipate an objection. You say, "The cause which we defend is God's: and we cannot stand by and see Him dishonoured by His adversaries; we cannot keep silence under their attacks and calumnies." And

who has bidden you keep silence? I am not here to defend a false tolerance, which would be nothing else than indifference and scepticism. No; truth has its rights over our hearts as well as over our minds, and he who adores in the Saviour its living image will not consent to see it vilified or branded with contempt. In every one of the blows aimed at truth he seems to hear afresh the smitings of the reed upon the head of Christ, as He stood in the pretorium. We are mindful that the beloved disciple is the one most severe in his polemics against heresy; but it was a holy severity, exempt from any taint of personal rancour. I know that in our day antichrist is waging a formidable warfare with God and His Anointed. He has crept into the Church itself, and is sapping its foundations by denying the supernatural on which it rests. He would hew and fashion our cornerstone to the taste of the age. It is not possible to remain indifferent at such a crisis. The very life of evangelical Christianity is at stake; for it ceases to be, when there is the denial of that great folly of the cross, which is at once its glory and shame, which is itself in fact. Let there then be no cowardice, no compromise. It is a struggle between two religions. Let every soldier range himself under his own banner, and let the fight be well and fairly fought! This is not the time to take the edge off the sword, which only saves by smiting, and in wounding heals. Nay, I go further; I hold that every honest conviction ought to express itself freely and clearly, and that we have not the right, even under pretext of maintaining peace, to keep a prudent silence in presence of a single error.

There is then no misunderstanding between us. I fully admit polemics clear and powerful: let the champions of the truth put forth vigorously all their intellectual and moral strength; but at the same time let them remember this great saying of St. James, "The wrath of man worketh not the righteousness of God." It is not possible for hatred and wrath to serve the cause of

eternal love. O ye who have suffered such influences to reign in your hearts, and yet stand forth as the defenders of pure doctrine, you are but profaners of the truth. Who has commissioned you to be instead of the Most High? What right have you to make His sacred name a screen for your petty passions? Is it enough for a vessel to carry the colours of a nation, in order to represent the honour of that nation to the world? If the standard floats over its deck, without the right to do so, it is no less a pirate ship upon the seas, though every breeze swell out the banner. Just so sails, upon the ocean of human opinion, the Church or sect which carries wrath and hatred under the false colours of Divine authority. Be not deceived; the most deadly enmities, the most implacable resentments, are those which pretend to serve a heavenly cause. When man supposes himself God's avenger, he thinks all things are lawful to him, and reaches the climax of iniquity. The greatest crimes which have ever stained the earth have been committed in the cause of religion. Was it not in the name of God, that the Son of God was sacrificed by the theocrats of Jerusalem? The crucifixion of Christ shows us what the wrath of man may do, when used to work the righteousness of God.

At that cross, my brethren, we learn what an infinite distance separates the "wrath of man" from the "righteousness of God." There in truth is God's holiness vindicated. His law has been broken by a rebellious race; the sinner cannot enter heaven with head erect; a reparation is needed, and this reparation can only be the perfect fulfilment of the law, in the very conditions under which mankind is placed by its violation. That is to say, this reparation can be nothing less than a sacrifice, for the final consequence of rebellion is death. Therefore the representative of humanity must be obedient unto death; or the sanction of the law will be nullified, and God can no more be called the "just God." Reconciliation can be effected only by the blood of the cross. In

this way the righteousness of God remains unimpaired; but mark how that righteousness rises above wrath! If it had the faintest resemblance to our passions of malice and hate, it would be satisfied with nothing but the extermination of the whole guilty race, with blow upon blow falling upon the wretched creatures who had offended against Him. But lo! the Holy One and the Just takes upon Him our nature, identifies Himself with the condemned race, that He may make it the partaker in His Divine life; and the sacrifice is accepted of God. Could He give a stronger proof that He is not avenging Himself on Calvary, but only maintaining the law of His kingdom, without which there would be disorder and anarchy in the universe? And this holy Victim, from what height does He stoop to the dust which drinks His blood? From the bosom of the Father; for it is the Son, only and well-beloved, who dies upon the accursed tree. Yes, it is He who is one with the Most High from all eternity; it is He who sweats those bloody drops, who "groans in spirit and is troubled," who utters that mysterious cry of desolation which no theology can explain; it is He who bows the head and dies. And the God who delivered Him for our offences, who was in Him reconciling the world unto Himself, is the God whom we have offended in our lives and reviled with our lips. And thus He takes vengeance on humanity. O vengeance, O love! O righteousness, O love! O infinite compassions! coals of fire laid upon our hearts! No, my brethren, "the wrath of man worketh not the righteousness of God." Whenever the God of love is accredited with the hateful passions of a man, whenever the redeeming sacrifice is regarded but as an act of vengeance or retaliation, the righteousness of God is lowered from heaven to earth, it is distorted into our own image, and the sublime declaration of James is disregarded. May our evangelical theology give to this subject all the attention it deserves, and above all learn from this great example, to eschew for ever that

leaven of malice which so often embitters our discussions!

"Let every man be slow to speak, slow to wrath; for the wrath of man worketh not the righteousness of God." Let these words be graven on our hearts. Let us pledge ourselves to break this precept no more. You will not break it, my brethren, if you realize to what a degree our passions compromise and dishonour the cause of God. I do not hesitate to say that Christianity has found its greatest hindrance in its unworthy champions. I am less astonished to see it triumph in spite of its enemies, than to see it triumph in spite of its false friends. Calculate, if you can, the evil that has been done by the injustice and violence of the representatives of religion! Do you not hear that terrible laugh of Voltaire's—that laugh, the curse of my country—answering the episcopal decrees which counselled and approved the revocation of the Edict of Nantes? Do you not see the eighteenth century—that great destroyer, that generous but fatal atheist—rising full armed out of the seventeenth century? Know that every injustice, every evil passion, sanctioned by the name of religion, is a seed of infidelity. Carry the truest and most delicate honesty into your religious polemics. Serve the noblest of causes by weapons worthy of it. Repudiate utterly all the petty calculations and unworthy artifices of ecclesiastical polity, the worst of all polities.

Nor let it be forgotten, further, that the cause of God is the cause of humanity, the cause of immortal souls. When you compromise it by your passions, you drive away those wandering souls, which you might have reclaimed. Error irritates you: but think of your brother as captive in the bonds of error, and then you will have a tender compassion for him, while you oppose his false doctrine, and you will not do him wrong under pretext of glorifying God. He will feel the throb of a brother's heart beneath your words; and who knows if you may not win him by the force of love? Would to God that

men had acted in this way towards so many heretics who have been only exasperated and repelled! Would to God that instead of the anathema they had been met with prayer and a hand stretched out to snatch them from the brink of the abyss! Compassionate love would have subdued many of them. Eusebius tells us that Beryllus, bishop of Bostra in Arabia, had fallen into grave errors upon the person of the Saviour. Two councils had condemned him, but he remained immovable. At length, by a holy suggestion of love, they sent to him one proscribed and excommunicated like himself; this was the great Origen, driven from Alexandria by clerical hatred and jealous prejudice. He came to Beryllus alone and unarmed, he was no representative of a hierarchy, he pleaded simply for truth. He spoke to him with love, his large heart and his large intellect poured forth their treasures; and the heretic was won back to the truth. Alas! this method has been rarely used. It is easier to anathematize than to entreat, to love, to conquer by tears and prayers; but be it known, account will have to be given at the judgment day for all the anathemas that have ruined souls. Yes, at the judgment seat of Christ there will be seen, side by side with those who cry presumptuously "Lord, Lord," confident men with cold and flinty faces, who will say, "We have not only honoured Thee, Lord; we have avenged Thee." And to them He will say, "I know you not; how could I recognise you as Mine? I was meek and lowly in heart; you were arrogant and implacable. I sought the wanderer, to bring him back; you sought him but to destroy. I am the God of love, and you are men of wrath. 'The wrath of man worketh not the righteousness of God.' Depart accursed, ye who have cursed so many."

Let us hope better things of you, my brethren. May a new era commence with these fraternal gatherings! Hitherto we have too often seen, on the one hand, a firm belief held forth like a bar of iron, or sharpened into a sword, and on the other hand tolerance making com-

mon cause with scepticism. Henceforward may there be manifest amongst us a strong and militant faith, in alliance with a tender charity. Then our words may be as mighty for good, as they have often been for evil. We shall speak as the children of a God most holy and most loving ought to speak. Oh that He may deign to speak in our midst, that we may learn to speak of Him aright! Yea, speak, Lord; speak, O patient God who bearest with us, Thou God who art of purer eyes than to behold iniquity, yet who pardonest still. Speak, O Eternal Truth, who art infinite love and spotless holiness, speak by our unworthy lips. Speak in our assemblies. Speak in the silence of our hearts: and may Thy Church receive one of those creative words which renovate and quicken from the dead!

The Supernatural at the Bar of Conscience.

THE

SUPERNATURAL AT THE BAR OF CONSCIENCE.

"And the disciples of John shewed him of all these things. And John calling unto him two of his disciples sent them to Jesus, saying, Art thou he that should come? or look we for another? When the men were come unto him, they said, John Baptist hath sent us unto thee, saying, Art thou he that should come? or look we for another? And in that same hour he cured many of their infirmities and plagues, and of evil spirits; and unto many that were blind he gave sight. Then Jesus answering said unto them, Go your way, and tell John what things ye have seen and heard; how that the blind see, the lame walk, the lepers are cleansed, the deaf hear, the dead are raised, to the poor the gospel is preached. And blessed is he, whosoever shall not be offended in me. And when the messengers of John were departed, he began to speak unto the people concerning John, What went ye out into the wilderness for to see? A reed shaken with the wind?"—LUKE vii. 18–24.

CHRISTIANITY ought to justify itself to the conscience; on no other ground is an earnest conviction possible. All belief, which does not rest on an adherence of the soul to the gospel, is without solid foundation. This is the characteristic trait of the first great apology for Christianity, that of the Master Himself: when He declared that the man who does the will of God shall know of His doctrine whether it be of God, He invoked conscience as His first witness. St. Paul at Athens, and St. John in his epistles, spoke to the same effect; and the evangelical theology of our age has honourably distinguished itself by bringing prominently forward this naturally Christian witness of the soul, that is, the appeal which the soul makes to Christianity in all its higher aspirations. It was left for our unquiet days to set aside this great proof, and to place it in opposition to supernatural Christianity, as that which is alone of the true apostolical succession. Taking as a starting-point the true idea, that religion ought to satisfy the conscience,

it is first attempted to get rid of all that in any degree passes our natural conceptions, as if the infinite thirst which consumes our soul and which is the thirst for God Himself, did not demand an infinite satisfaction, such as the mind can but dimly conceive. It is then pretended that all that is properly miraculous is foreign to the demands of conscience, and that conscience has obtained all which it seeks, when it has been presented in the gospel with a code of pure morality and the revelation of the Divine goodness. If it is urged that the supernatural character is deeply impressed on every page of the gospel, the cry is raised that in appealing to this we forsake the great moral apology and fall back upon the track of an antiquated theology. Now this is what we emphatically deny. We hold, on the contrary, that if the conscience yields assent to Christianity it is because it finds in it that supernatural element which was wanting in the noblest schools of philosophy. It is this, after all, which is the truly new and original element of the gospel: for, in mere theory, the wisdom of the ancients had dimly foreshadowed the love of God and man; but it was an incomplete conception and wholly ideal. Here there is a living thought, a realized idea, embodied in miracle. We maintain that this miracle is just that which the conscience demands, and that consequently the great moral argument leads not to deistic naturalism, but to the most positive acceptance of the supernatural.

We make at the outset one proviso, that it be the conscience which is interrogated and not reason alone; for we constantly find the two terms used interchangeably in polemics. We ask next, that it be an upright and awakened conscience to which the appeal be made. Let such a conscience be brought into the presence of Jesus Christ, and I am absolutely certain that faith will germinate and be developed. Unhappily, that which is too often wanting is this upright conscience. When it is absent, no argument and no evidence can make good one step of religious ground.

That I may show clearly therefore what I intend by this first condition of the normal formation of our convictions, I take one of the purest, most elevated types of the gospel history. I take John the Baptist, in the hour when a cloud had come over his faith, and when he sent two of his disciples to ask Jesus if He was indeed "he who was to come."

There can be no doubt as to the issue of such a crisis. When it is an upright conscience which asks, and Jesus who answers, a great light must be produced from the contact, and you will soon see that this light falls full upon the question of supernatural Christianity.

Perhaps some may be astonished that we should attribute to the Baptist even a passing doubt. It is asserted that, in sending two of his disciples to the Saviour, to ask Him if He was truly Messiah, he simply designed to strengthen their faith by bringing them into direct contact with the Divine Master. Calvin even goes so far as to accuse those of frivolity who think otherwise. In spite of my respect for the great reformer, I cannot admit his interpretation. For, first of all, it is not in harmony with the text. The first sense which strikes the mind is certainly that which I have given. The disciples of John the Baptist speak unquestionably in their master's name. If his intention was only to dispel their uncertainty, I do not comprehend why he should have simulated doubt, a very sure method of increasing their hesitation. He should, on the contrary, have shown them first of all his own conviction, and then have said to them, "Appeal to Him who is greater than I, and see for yourselves." I confess that my conception of this great servant of God would be lowered, if I could suppose him to be employing a stratagem, worthy only of the system of Rousseau, which consists in a succession of surprises, the master always playing serious comedy for the instruction of his pupils. The disciples of John speak unhesitatingly in his name; "John Baptist hath sent us unto thee, saying, Art thou he that should come?"

In opposition to our interpretation, we are reminded of the firm testimony borne by the forerunner of Christ at the beginning of his ministry. But this is to overlook the strange mobility of human nature, which passes so easily from one impression to another, and is never held by the inflexible chains of logic. The great servants of God were subject to the same infirmities as ourselves. Scripture shows a holy imprudence, a sublime candour, in revealing to us their weaknesses and their falls. Why should I marvel at an hour of doubt in him who is called the second Elias, when I see the prophet of Carmel, the man who so nobly represented the great power of God, prostrate in the desert under a juniper tree, crying, "It is enough; now take away my life"? You look for logic in the lives of the saints? You will find none assuredly in that dejection of Elijah. It was at the very time when he had put forth his utmost power, that he uttered that cry of distress. The soul is the subject of strong and sudden reactions; now it is in the seventh heaven, now in the dust. Let us remember also that it is a weighty commission to be God's witness in a wicked world, to enter into a conflict that knows no truce, with all the powers of evil, and often to see the field which we have watered with tears and the sweat of toil, barren and fruitless, when it should be white unto the harvest. One only has been able to bear this burden without yielding under it; and He was One greater than Elijah or John the Baptist. And even He fulfilled His ministry in much sorrowfulness of spirit, and there was an hour in His earthly history of yet deeper anguish than any Elijah knew, when His sweat was as it were great drops of blood falling down to the ground. In Gethsemane the cry "It is enough" was almost ready to break from His lips, and He did pray, "Let this cup pass from me." It is true that even in this hour of extremest agony He did not know doubt, and rose from the conflict clothed in the shining panoply of a perfect obedience; but yet He did groan and weep. Be not astonished then if the faith

of John the Baptist had its eclipse, even after the glorious vision of the Jordan. His testimony stands sure: it is not weakened by the momentary weakness of its witness; for truth is greater than we are, and if we can do much for the truth we can do nothing against it.

There is beside an easy explanation of the Baptist's doubt. The forerunner was still a son of the old covenant; he had not crossed its boundary; his faith was noble, but his knowledge was incomplete. Like Moses, he beheld, but did not enter the land of promise. Therefore it is that, in knowledge at any rate, Jesus Christ declares the least in the kingdom of heaven to be greater than he. Observe that this declaration was made on the very occasion of which we are speaking, when John had sent his disciples to Jesus, a fresh proof that our interpretation is well founded. Observe also the conclusion of Christ's remarks upon John, "Blessed is he whosoever shall not be offended in me." The words imply some blame for the hesitation of the Baptist,—blame which lasts no longer than the doubtfulness of the forerunner. Imbued with the spirit of the old covenant, he expected, like the apostles at this period, an august manifestation of Messiah, to be preceded no doubt by the preaching of repentance, and accompanied with the outpouring of the Spirit of holiness, but yet to be triumphant and irresistible. Instead of this, what does he see? The mission of the Master is carried on in all humility; the wicked rulers of the nation are still uppermost, their power is unrestrained, and he, the preacher of righteousness, is languishing in a gloomy prison. His mighty voice is doomed to silence, and attentive crowds can no longer throng the Jordan banks, to receive his baptism. That which sickens the heroic heart is not captivity, not the long solitary hours, the heavy fetters, the chilly darkness, and the slow approach of death. No, his heart sinks because the kingdom of God seems to fail before his eyes, because that grand movement which was drawing on the masses of the people seems suddenly checked, because

the hope which he had built upon Jesus is growing faint and far. Zeal for the house of God consumes him; and there is nothing personal, nothing selfish in his doubts.

These last reflections show us that, even in the hour of doubting, John the Baptist was a man of duty. See him in that dark dungeon. He has but to say one word, he has but to give the king one promise, he has but to seem to sanction, by silence, the incestuous love of Herod; and instantly his chains fall, he has freedom for fetters, the royal favour, and the smiles of Herodias. But the man of God does not hesitate a moment; he remains the inflexible witness for law and right; from the depth of his dark, damp cell, his voice echoes Herod's accusing conscience; and whenever the memory of the captive prophet passes across the mind of the king as he reposes on his couch of royal purple, the pallor comes upon his face, and the dark shadow gathers on his brow. Such men cannot be endured. John the Baptist will not have long to wait for death, if he will continue to the end the unshrinking witness for God.

There is then no analogy between the doubt of John the Baptist and the frivolous doubt which is only a mental amusement, or which awakes the proud desire to be free from all belief. There is also another kind of doubt, which is a dangerous and culpable exercise of the reason, sporting with the infinite, like the madness of those acrobats who stretch a tight rope across Niagara and dance upon it. We are familiar with that bold analysis of the great truths of the absolute and the Divine, which bears a striking resemblance to such fool-hardiness. To doubts of this kind, Jesus vouchsafes no answer. Neither has truth anything to teach the profane man, who fears the light because his deeds are evil. There was no such darkness in John the Baptist. He was a child of the day, seeking ever to walk in the pure light of life, and going forward boldly in the path of righteousness. He has nothing to conceal; all he desires is fuller light. John the Baptist, questioning the Master, repre-

sents then conscience face to face with Jesus Christ. Is it possible that the harmony which exists between them should not be made gloriously manifest? The prisoner of Machærus cannot repudiate the Crucified One of Calvary; the martyr for righteousness' sake cannot fail to comprehend the holy Victim of love. It is indeed the great voice of conscience which speaks in him. As is the question, so will be the answer; and you will see that this answer will assert nothing less than supernatural Christianity in all its grandeur. For the conscience will only be satisfied with that which goes far beyond the grasp of reason. That which it seeks is something which it has not entered into the heart of man to conceive.

Let us now read again the words of the Saviour: "Go your way, and tell John what things ye have seen and heard; how that the blind see, the lame walk, the lepers are cleansed, the deaf hear, the dead are raised, to the poor the gospel is preached." Do the words of the Master imply that our faith is to be founded simply on prodigies,—I mean on the mere manifestation of power? Nothing can be more alien to the mind and method of Jesus Christ. Miracle by itself would not establish the truth of a single doctrine, since it is beyond question that the power of evil has had its extraordinary manifestations. May I not say that as great an array of the merely marvellous could be brought in support of evil and error as of truth? Do not our holy books speak of the "power and signs and lying wonders" of antichrist? Beside, prodigies address themselves to the eye and not to the heart; they make their appeal to the outer, not to the inner man. Thus the faith which is founded on them has no depth or solidity. Jesus Christ was forsaken by those who had only believed in Him on the faith of His marvellous works; they followed His steps when He multiplied the loaves; they were not found when He was dying for them upon the cross. If He had desired to found faith upon miracles, He would have lavished them, instead of refusing them to the curiosity of the people. When

the Jews demand of Him outward and miraculous signs of His mission, He calls them a faithless generation, and declares that no sign shall be given them but the sign of the prophet Jonas. Again and again He asserts the impotence of mere miracle. The conclusion of the parable of the rich man and Lazarus is that men of hardened heart would not be converted "though one rose from the dead."* "Blessed are they that have not seen, and yet have believed," said the Lord to Thomas. St. Paul summed up all these considerations when, with his accustomed boldness of language, he said, "The Jews desire a sign, and the Greeks seek after wisdom." In other words, the former desire to see the truth with the eye of the body, the latter with the eye of natural reason. Both are men of sight, and they alike fail to reach that invisible world where, borne upon the wings of faith, the soul contemplates those things which "eye hath not seen, nor ear heard."

And what are those things which are beyond the reach of eye and ear, if they are not the revelation of God Himself and of His essential being? Now the essence of God's being is not power. He is indeed the High and Lofty One, the Almighty; but when you have uttered these attributes, you have not pronounced His name: His name, His essence is love. It follows that a prodigy, which is nothing more than a prodigy, reveals indeed His power, but not His love; now to ignore His love is to be ignorant of Him. Miracle alone cannot then produce true faith, for faith knows God and takes hold of Him. That which we say of God applies no less to Him who came in the name of God, "the express image of his person." Consequently the most dazzling miracles would not in themselves be effectual to make one Christian.

And yet, it may be truly said, Jesus Christ appeals to His works: "If ye believe not me, believe the works." His reply to John the Baptist points clearly to His miracles. I grant it; but it would be a grave error to

* Luke xvi. 32.

liken the works of Jesus Christ to mere prodigies, simple manifestations of power. Not one of them but gives a bright evidence of His love. Pass in review the miracles enumerated in our text; do they not transport us into a sphere infinitely higher than that of the marvellous? Do they not lift us into the calm, pure region of love? Not one of them is designed to excite merely admiration or astonishment. They have no resemblance to the idle prodigy, which the tempter suggested to Jesus when he urged Him to throw Himself down from the pinnacle of the temple, that the angels might bear Him up in their hands. All His miracles bear the impress of benevolent goodness. When He would heal the sick, the blind, He drew near and laid His hands on them with tender compassion; for them He passed by the rich and the great; He sought them out in the midst of the multitudes who thronged Him and pressed Him, and listened to their cry when even the disciples murmured at them. He stood still to lay a healing touch on the poor lepers, outcasts from society; and His tears were ready to flow with the widow of Nain, before He raised her son to life, and delivered him again to his mother.

Thus all His miracles are illuminated with a ray of love. They all lead up to that which He Himself places as the climax, the crowning miracle, "to the poor the gospel is preached." The gospel! do you realize what is comprehended in that single word? The gospel is not the love which expends itself in rich gifts; it is the love which is needed by an unhappy and condemned race, such as is described by many traits in the sacred story, a race which numbers so many sufferers from various forms of evil, and which is ultimately devoted to death. When, from the outward ills which flesh is heir to, we pass to the woes of the spirit, of which they are the too faithful symbol, when we consider the blindness of man's inward eye, the leprosy of sin which consumes him, that paralysis of the will which renders him incapable of any good, that moral death which strikes to the root of

his being, how can we suppose that nothing extraordinary has happened in his history? Who would hesitate to admit that the manifestations of Divine love must be themselves strange and extraordinary, as is the malady they are to remedy? The conscience, at least, will never believe that the existing condition of things is all in order, that evil is only an accident, or a contingent of progress. These are the inventions of a mind skilful in self-deception. Conscience feels that sin is a culpable thing, which must be imputed to the free creature; it measures the extent and gravity of the evil by the suffering arising from it. This conviction is in the conscience as a barbed arrow, the point of which cannot be drawn out. Violence must be done to it, to bring it to repudiate this its intuitive belief, which so scandalizes the pride of man. Apart from such violence, conscience believes in the fall with all its strength, and with all the poignant anguish of remorse.

The gospel, which presupposes the fall, places before our eyes those amazing, extraordinary manifestations of Divine love which are destined to raise the ruined race. It is not simply the love which creates, which is needed now, but that which saves, which pardons and gives itself a sacrifice. The gospel brings us the Good Shepherd, seeking the lost sheep in the wilderness; and when we remember from what a height of glory, to what a depth of humiliation, that Divine love descended, we may well conceive that it could only find scope for the manifestation of itself, through the suspension of the laws of nature, and that it would allow nothing to hinder it in the accomplishment of its vast design. And is there anything in such a statement to provoke the opposition of an upright conscience, such as that of John the Baptist? I will tell you what would stumble and offend such a conscience; it would be the thought that there is in heaven a God mighty and free, and upon earth a lost and miserable being, and that that God is pledged by His dignity to abandon the creature to the natural

order of things, because that natural order had been determined by the laws of creation. Yes, it is such a God as this whom my conscience rejects; for there is no escape from one of two alternatives; either He is not free, or He is not good. In the former case, He is but a name for natural law; in the latter He is not the ideal of goodness, and I am better than He; against either alternative my conscience indignantly protests. Of what avail to me is physical immutability? That which I crave in Him is what I may call moral immutability; that I may know that the God of love is faithful to Himself, and that to save me He will overturn, if need be, heaven and earth. Such an overturning would be as nothing, compared to the inconceivably awful change that must take place in God Himself, before, in the name of His dignity, He could refuse His aid to a poor fallen creature. He would then be nothing more than the cold and awful Sovereign of creation. Such a God is not He "in whom there is no variableness, neither shadow of turning." A dark and chilling shadow has come over His face, and I can contemplate Him only with dread. To see Him would be indeed to die. The God whom conscience demands is then a God who makes natural order subordinate to His merciful designs, who has the right to have compassion, and who uses it freely. Thus the supernatural is not an appendix, an accessory of religion; it lies at the foundation of faith in that living, loving God after whom my heart pants. The God of my conscience is the God whose name is love.

This love appears to us so much the more beautiful, that it is absolutely disinterested, and is exercised towards creatures the most miserable and degraded. Love glories in self-humiliation. The farther it descends into the depths of misery, the higher in the eye of conscience it rises. This absolute disinterestedness, manifested in pity for all that is small and despised, is the most royal trait of love. We perceive then why Jesus gives this as the last proof of the greatness of His mission, that the

gospel is preached to the poor. That He should have come down at all, into our fallen and sinful race, was itself an act of infinite abasement. But among the children of our race He chose the poor, the sorrowful, the ignorant, the despised. With them He lived; He took upon Him their sufferings, He gave Himself to them more than to any other class. These simple words, "to the poor the gospel is preached," show me redeeming love in its highest expression, in its reiteration if I may so speak. They reveal it stooping from the abode of glory to the abode of guilt, and then descending yet another step, to diffuse itself first of all in earth's saddest and darkest places. It is in this lowest depth, in the midst of human darkness and distress, that the Divine shines forth with purest lustre, and the glory of the gospel is most manifest. This revelation of God comes from the depth of His being, and reaches to the depths of the human hearts. For on the one hand we behold not a simple attribute, as His power, His greatness, or omniscience: we have the manifestation of His very being, of His heart, His fatherly heart; and there is no depth beyond. On the other hand, we have an appeal to the most accessible side of our nature, that which is the most surely reached, the most deeply touched. This is not a matter of knowledge, but of conscience. The gospel preached to the poor is comprehended, received, welcomed by the poor, because it reaches that which is most fundamental in man, his heart and soul. Such love corresponds to the image of God within us, and blends with the moral ideal which is the very element of the conscience: conscience awakes and rises to new life under the supreme and touching manifestations of Divine love, which it beholds in Jesus.

Do you mark that Man of calm and gentle aspect, whose brow is crowned with holiness as with a halo, whose glance transfixes every heart? He is surrounded with publicans and sinners; the sick are brought to Him on beds; the possessed cry aloud at His presence; the

blind call Him; and the woman which was a sinner falls at His feet, weeping, yet full of hope. His train is of the weary and the sorrowful. He draws them irresistibly to Himself. Listen. Like dew upon the thirsty earth, His words drop upon the broken-hearted, "Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest." And they came; for He spoke not as the scribes and Pharisees; and they were healed and blessed. The arms of His infinite tendernesses embrace all their woes. He has compassion on the multitudes who have nothing to eat, and on the dispersed of Israel who are as sheep without a shepherd. He has bread for their bodily hunger, and words of eternal life for their souls. He heals the sick, and pardons the sinner. Wherever there are mourners, He goes to weep and to help; upon His pale features, and in His earnest eye, I see the reflection of all the sorrows of a ruined race. Such is the progress of the Good Shepherd of the sheep, surrounded by His suffering flock. He shows Himself their friend, their deliverer, up to the day in which He lays down His life for them. Shall we not exclaim, with the Jews who saw Him weeping at the tomb of Lazarus, "Behold how He loved them"? Is there not here a love more than human? Is not this the love of God, in its most tender, most sublime manifestation? You ask if Jesus was indeed Messiah who was to come? Is not this He whom your soul has been seeking? Can you imagine a Being, more loving, more holy, more helpful? Have you in your heart a loftier ideal than this? Fall then at His feet, and worship Him.

Will it perhaps be said that the conscience was better satisfied, at the time when John the Baptist sent his disciples to Jesus Christ, than subsequently, after the cross and the resurrection? Far otherwise. It is, on the contrary, by the accursed tree and the empty sepulchre that it finds its supreme satisfaction. I know that as he passes before the cross, the Jew, who is in quest of a manifestation of earthly glory, cries Scandal; and the

subtle Greek, who seeks purely logical truth, says Folly. But neither the one nor the other has spoken the verdict of conscience. Conscience knows that if the fall is a fearful tragedy, reparation must be more than an idyll. Everywhere and always conscience has sought for salvation by sacrifice. Often this instinct has been mingled with gross errors; humanity, even Christian humanity, has too often transferred to God its own emotions; it has seen mysterious vengeance, where in truth there is holy reconciliation, wrought by a great sacrifice. Conscience protests undoubtedly against the errors and exaggerations of this or that theology: but show to it the cross of the gospel, on which the Man of sorrows accepts the death which He has not deserved, and makes the willing sacrifice of love, which upon that blood-stained altar brings back to God the heart of a rebellious race; show to it the "Lamb of God who taketh away the sin of the world;" and it clings to that cross, as to the only hope of salvation; it can only believe in pardon sealed with such a seal. Whenever the idea of the redeeming sacrifice is withdrawn from the drama of Calvary, the lie is given, not only to the teaching of the apostles, but also to all the strong, universal aspirations of the human conscience. But point to the Divine Sufferer, praying and pardoning in the hour of mortal anguish, bearing on His wounded heart the burden of our transgressions, throwing over the crime of His murderers the cloak of a love greater still; and you will hear afresh that cry of the centurion, "Surely this was the Son of God." This is the verdict of conscience passed on the thorn-crowned King; and it is thus that it welcomes with approval all that is most amazing in the awful miracle of the cross.

But is all then accomplished, and conscience satisfied? No, it knows well that it is not possible for the Holy One and the Just to be held in the bonds of the grave, or that the wages of sin should be the ultimate portion of Him whose holiness reached its most perfect develop-

ment in His death. The simple notion of justice makes it impossible to conceive of Jesus remaining in the dust. When on the third day redeeming love reappears, victorious over death and sin, attesting by a glorious fact that the ransom offered for the sentenced race has been accepted, conscience breaks forth in heavenly joy. For this it waits. If the stone of the sepulchre is not rolled away, there is no confirmation of the fact of redemption. Then our faith is vain; we are yet in our sins, and we are of all men most miserable. Then upon the gravestone of Jesus we may write as our epitaph, "Without God and without hope." The resurrection is not simply another signature appended to the contract of pardon; the contract itself is not ratified without it. Let the human conscience look into the empty sepulchre, or it will seek another Messiah than Jesus. O you who think otherwise, you know not yet what is death and what its terrors; you have not realized what terrible confusion it reveals in our moral condition. If you truly know what it is for a race destined to life eternal to die, you will not regard it as a thing indifferent, that the bonds of the tomb have been mightily broken by the Second Adam. At any rate, speak for yourselves alone, you who proclaim the resurrection of Christ an indifferent matter, and do not assume to be the organs of the Christian conscience.

You see that such a conscience cannot be content with the vague, colourless notions of love and of righteousness, which you find in all the doctrines of man. That which it demands is redeeming love, with its mystery, its folly, its humiliations, its triumphs—in one word, with the cross and the resurrection. We avail ourselves then of the great moral and internal evidence, to establish that which seems most strange to our human reason, that which goes infinitely beyond it; and we venture to say that, essentially, conscience has always and everywhere demanded that which it finds in the gospel of the supernatural. Let a superficial theology

scoff as it will, it has not been able to read the book of the soul any more than the book of revelation. Give us upright and sensitive consceinces, like that of John the Baptist; and you will see that they will rest satisfied with nothing less. Though an angel from heaven offered them another gospel, they would not receive it. Be very sure that on the day when, in the world and in the visible Church, conscience shall have regained her native vigour, you will see all the forms, more or less feeble, of an emasculated Christianity, melt away and disappear before the fervour of its aspirations, as tow is consumed in the fire.

The Adoration of Mary the Sister of Lazarus.

THE ADORATION OF MARY THE SISTER OF LAZARUS.

"Then Jesus six days before the passover came to Bethany, where Lazarus was which had been dead, whom he raised from the dead. There they made him a supper; and Martha served: but Lazarus was one of them that sat at the table with him. Then took Mary a pound of ointment of spikenard, very costly, and anointed the feet of Jesus, and wiped his feet with her hair: and the house was filled with the odour of the ointment. Then saith one of his disciples, Judas Iscariot, Simon's son, which should betray him, Why was not this ointment sold for three hundred pence, and given to the poor? This he said, not that he cared for the poor; but because he was a thief, and had the bag, and bare what was put therein. Then said Jesus, Let her alone: against the day of my burying hath she kept this. For the poor always ye have with you; but me ye have not always. Much people of the Jews therefore knew that he was there: and they came not for Jesus' sake only, but that they might see Lazarus also, whom he had raised from the dead."—JOHN xii. 1–9.

THE moral creature is formed for the worship of God. Laden with the gifts of God's love, he is bound to live to His glory, and to render back in adoration all that he has received from Him. The two greatest benefits by which he is distinguished are the capacities of knowing and loving; both have the effect of bringing him prostrate before God; the more he knows, the more he loves, and the more therefore he adores. For man to know, in the true sense of the word, is to measure the infinite distance between himself and the Most High, to compare his own insignificance with God's greatness, his own feebleness with God's power, the imperceptible point of space which he occupies, with the boundless immensity which God fills with His presence; it is to comprehend that all holiness, all wisdom, dwell in Him; it is to be dazzled by the glories of the Uncreated Eternal Light. True knowledge, far from exalting the creature, humbles and

lays him low before God: he is only uplifted by the ignorance which, hiding from him the true perfection, suffers him to compare himself with himself, the little with the less; while true knowledge makes true greatness his standard of comparison. Pride puffs up only because it stultifies. Let the veil be torn from the eyes, and man falls on his knees; for it is in this attitude alone he can look up to God. While knowledge humbles the creature, love puts prayer into his lips, and inspires those fervent utterances which are as the incense of the heart consumed in its own flame. Overwhelmed by the disclosures of knowledge, the soul is wrapt into a holy ecstasy by love. All the light which fell upon it becomes heat, which glows without consuming. It adores not merely the Lord God Almighty, but the God of infinite goodness. His praises it delights to repeat. Adoration is not merely the prostration of the finite before the Infinite Spirit; it is an outpouring of the soul; it is the response of grateful love to love beneficent; and the very consciousness of inability to make the gratitude equal to the gift feeds constantly in the soul the desire to break forth in various forms of thanksgiving. Thus, wherever knowledge and love are present conjointly, the soul adores. What is the life of heaven but adoration perfected? Whenever the veil which hides it from us is lifted, we behold the angels bowing reverently before the throne of God, covering their faces with their wings, because they have so true a knowledge of the excellent glory that they cannot bear its splendour, and crying one to another, "Holy, Holy, Holy, Lord God Almighty," in hymns which are the fervent language of heavenly love. The blessed, "redeemed from among men," whom we behold in the book of Revelation,—our forerunners in the abode of harmony and rest,—chant the praises of God and of Christ. They are blessed only because they perfectly worship the Saviour. The nearer we come in knowledge and in love to their condition, the more, like them, we shall adore. Christianity, in unveiling to us the heart

and mind of God, in bringing us back to truth and love, makes us worshippers again. It bids us give to our piety a character of deep humility and holy ardour. It urges us to bow with all the blessed before the Lord God, and to stammer forth our praises. Have we thought enough of this aspect of religion? Have we given to it all the importance it deserves? I think not: the element of adoration has not had its due in our Christianity; our religion has been too intellectual or too practical; it has been stereotyped and rigid. I think therefore it will be not inopportune, to set before our consideration the type of tender, solemn, mystical piety, which finds its happiness in adoration. And where shall we find such a type, more pure, more attractive, than in Mary the sister of Lazarus, who, not content with sitting at the feet of Christ, poured over them the very precious ointment, and wiped them with her hair. If we grasp aright the significance of this act, so beautiful, so touching, we shall know what is meant by Christian adoration.

Let us notice, first of all, in Mary, a blending of profound respect with tender affection for the person of Jesus Christ. She falls down before Him as a poor sinful woman before her Saviour and her God. She can find no form of outward reverence strong enough to convey the homage of her soul. She would gladly take a humbler station still, if it were possible, to mark how much she honours Him, and how far she places Him above the greatest and the best of men. But there is nothing cold or formal in her veneration; it does not keep her at a distance from her Saviour, trembling and scarce daring to lift up her eyes or to speak to Him, as though she were in the presence of some awful Being, enthroned like an oriental king in solitary and unapproachable grandeur.

The sister of Lazarus did not remain on the threshold of the house which Jesus had entered. She followed Him; she came near and listened to Him; she fell at

His feet, and testified her affection in a manner not to be mistaken. There was tenderness in her respect, respect in her tenderness; and this is the perfect union, which constitutes the first characteristic of Christian adoration. Take away either element, and you destroy its true nature. Let respect, absolute reverence be gone, and it is nothing more than a human affection. Let the tender affection be wanting, and it is but graceless homage, differing in little from that which might be offered by evil spirits, for the devils also believe and tremble before God. We must be on our guard then equally against an unbecoming familiarity and a ceremonious coldness, in our relations with Jesus Christ. Let us not take advantage, as it were, of His condescension towards us, of His humiliation unto death for our sake. Let us discern, beneath this form of humiliation, this veil of humanity, that which is greatest in heaven and on earth, the free self-sacrifice of redeeming love. Mary is not misled by appearances, nor because the Divine Master has entered into her house and sat down at her table, does she imagine herself His equal. Rather is she all the more conscious of her unworthiness, and as she beholds in that humble dwelling the King of glory whom the heaven of heavens cannot contain, she is seized with a sacred awe. Perhaps she would be less urgent to express her adoration if He appeared to her in all His glory; but before such a guest she feels a bewilderment of awful joy. Let us imitate her example. Jesus Christ, according to His promise, has come to sup with us. He enters into every Christian house. Let us feel like Mary, overwhelmed at such Divine condescension. Let it move our spirits to a more humble adoration, that our Saviour deigns to stoop so low to us. Is not the whole Christian Church one house of Bethany, into which Christ has entered? Oh, let Him never be ignored, on the plea that He has neither form nor comeliness. Let Him never be treated simply as an equal. If we are permitted to hold intercourse *with Him*, and even to lean, like St. John, on His bosom,

let us not forget that we must also, like Mary, throw ourselves at His feet, and that the tokens of His Divine love, so tender, so multiplied, far from releasing us from the duty of worship, the rather lay upon us a new and more urgent claim.

Our God is a consuming fire. The new covenant, no less than the old, has its burning bush, before which we must, like Moses, take off our shoes from off our feet. But this burning bush is not on Sinai, it is on Calvary. Therefore is the tenderest affection blended with reverence in Mary. She knows of what love she has been the object. She knows that the great, pure Being, before whom she kneels, is her Saviour, a compassionate Saviour, a friend, a brother, but at the same time a God—at once the Man of Sorrows and the Son of the Most High. Never has He repelled her; goodness, and gentleness, and truth have ever made her welcome. She sees Divine love in His countenance, its accents thrill her heart, when He speaks in that low voice so full of comfort. How could her heart but burn within her? How could she fail to love as much as she adored? Her soul was divided between tenderness and awe, and the two are ever inseparable in Christian adoration.

Adoration is, in truth, the highest and purest expression of love to Jesus Christ. When we meditate on His word, seek to extract truth from it, and follow it out to all its consequences, there is a natural sense of gratification in the exercise of our faculties, the employment of intellectual activity. When we take part in the work of God in the world, when we proclaim the everlasting gospel and extend its peaceful conquests, we experience a certain excitement in our deed, a satisfaction not absolutely pure. When we suffer for Christ's sake, when we are exposed to insult and persecution, we may catch with pleasure, even in the midst of our sufferings, the echo of our own name, and be willing to purchase our religious reputation at the price of our afflictions. In adoration on the contrary, whenever it is sincere, man loses him-

self utterly, he forgets himself, humbles himself; he has no other impulse than the desire to glorify his Lord and Saviour. He thus approaches most nearly to perfectly disinterested love. Ask Mary why she falls thus at the feet of Jesus. She will reply, "Because I love Him." Her act, regarded in the light of cold, calculating reason, is strange and inexplicable. Judas, and all such barren hearts, see no beauty in it. They ask, "To what purpose is it?" "To no purpose," answers Mary, "but to testify my holy affection for the Master." But this is the one great purpose of the Christian heart: to love is to live. It is easy to perceive how important a part belongs to adoration in the Christian life. The Church is designed to teach and to act; she is to do even greater works than those of her Divine Master: but no teaching or acting, no nor the working of mightiest miracles, can dispense with the necessity of adoration, for she is only sure of loving perfectly, without reserve or measure, when she adores. In every act of service or of teaching, undertaken without the spirit of adoration, she becomes a busy Martha, who may in the end forget to love the Lord, under pretext of zeal in serving Him.

If the first characteristic of Mary's adoration is a blending of respect and love, the second is what I may call its impulsiveness, its perfect spontaneity. She obeys the dictate of her heart; she does not ask if those who look on will be astonished or scandalized; she does not endeavour to subdue this holy impetuosity; she follows, with generous imprudence, the irresistible impulse of affection which she feels for the Saviour. Without this holy ardour there is no adoration. Adoration demands enthusiasm. It scorns to use the scales of avarice; it thinks not of moderation, and cannot be brought under the rules of human wisdom. The adoring soul is oppressed and overwhelmed, with the feeling of the greatness and goodness of God; it loves to plunge into the abyss of His perfections, and there as it were to lose itself. It flows forth in tears, in sighs which cannot be

uttered; it is restless as the sea, till it can find some outlet for its love. It will not be restrained by the opinion of the world, or by its ridicule. It soars above all secondary considerations, it shakes them off, like chains which fetter it to earth. Thus it attains the third heaven spoken of by St. Paul, and learns to utter feebly, even on earth, the angelic hosannah which shall be its song through all eternity. Nothing is more opposed to servile imitation than an adoring spirit. It cannot contain itself in the cramped mould of conventional piety. It is ever governed by the same mighty impulse of love which we have marked in Mary. It is essentially spontaneous, and the boldness of its manifestations will amaze and scandalize cold hearts and narrow minds in every age.

But there is yet another element in the adoration of Mary, on which we cannot lay too much stress—it is the element of sacrifice. "She took," we are told, "a box of ointment of spikenard, very precious." It was not enough for her to say she loved the Saviour; she would prove it by an offering. We need not pause on the particular gift which at this time she brought. It betokened a larger gift, the gift of her whole being, of her heart. This is the box of ointment broken over the feet of Christ; and it may be said that the whole house of God, the Church, has been filled with the odour of this ointment. Yes, Mary gave her soul to Christ; she brought it to Him a living sacrifice. Divested of the character of sacrifice, adoration is but falsehood and hypocrisy, or at best it is but superficial. It is easy to bow the knee before God; it is hard to bow the will. It is easy to sing hymns, and to use the ardent words of ecstasy; it is hard to say from the depth of a broken heart, "Not my will, but Thine be done." It is easy to fill heaven and earth with the praises of God; it is hard to lay on His altar the cherished idol. And yet there can be no adoration so long as the one is withheld. We cannot adore without recognising the absolute sovereignty

of God, and in a fallen and rebellious world this recognition must be built on the ruins of our own pride and self-will. In the adoration of the ancient people of God, it was not the gorgeous ceremonial, nor the chant of psalms, which filled the foremost place: it was sacrifice. And it must be the same in the adoration of the Christian. The altar has not been removed out of its place, nor has the victim: only henceforth the priest and the sacrifice are one. The victim is thyself, disciple of Jesus Christ, king and priest of the new covenant. Those only are the true worshippers, who have yielded themselves "a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable." From broken hearts rises the "incense of a sweet savour" to God. The box must needs be broken, that the precious ointment may flow forth upon the feet of Christ.

But we must not allow this severe aspect of true Christian worship to make us indifferent to one more characteristic of the adoration of Mary—the beauty of its expression. This ointment which she poured over the feet of the Saviour, wiping them with her hair, how beautiful an emblem is it of the feelings filling her heart! What sublime poetry, may we not say, is there in this act! It is well that the expression of our adoration should be marked by the same beauty. We ought to seek all that is most exquisite, most precious, most perfect upon earth, to bring as our tribute to Jesus Christ. That sacred sense of the beautiful which God has given us can never have a more legitimate satisfaction than in being consecrated to His glory. Let us beware of thinking that the more bare and poor are our forms of adoration, the more agreeable are they to God, and that He loves better to hear His praises upon a dull and vulgar tongue than in language noble and refined. Unquestionably, the importance of the form is nothing, compared to the importance of the thought and feeling. God prefers the humblest sigh of a soul sincere, to the most high-sounding worship of the lip. But we must not suppose that in any case moral superiority belongs

necessarily to mediocrity. Why not enshrine the precious ointment of praise in an alabaster box? Why make a merit of bringing it in a vase of clay? If Jesus Christ required that our worship should be cast in the mould of a rigid puritanism, He would have rebuked Mary; for her act of adoration was at variance with all its precepts. And, with regard to ourselves, we believe that while scrupulously avoiding an idolatrous attachment to forms, the Christian Church is right when she seeks for the expression of her adoration symbols full of beauty and grandeur. We feel no indignation when we see her rearing a majestic edifice for worship, or when she celebrates her praise in hymns of touching eloquence. We do not say with Judas, "To what purpose was this waste? for this ointment might have been sold for three hundred pence, and given to the poor." We remember the precious ointment poured forth by the sister of Lazarus, and the approbation of the Master; and we exclaim, "He is worthy to receive all honour, and glory, and blessing; and there is nothing upon earth beautiful enough to be a fit offering to Him."

We have thus noticed in the example of Mary the various characteristics of Christian adoration. We shall learn from the same source what are the sentiments which nourish and develop it. We have already indicated the first, the most important, when we pointed out that the essential characteristic of adoration is love. If love is the fruit, it is also the root of all true worship. But it is not enough to refer to it thus generally; we must mark some of its distinctive features. And, first of all, this love is founded upon gratitude. The sister of Lazarus remembers what the Master has done for her. She remembers that journey, undertaken in the midst of a thousand perils, to come to the help of her and her sister. She sees Him arriving at Bethany, to comfort them with those words which He alone could speak; nor was He satisfied with speaking, He wept with them. Oh, those tears of the Saviour fell upon her heart! She

will never forget them; she felt at that hour how deep were His compassions. And then what did she see? The dead raised sudden from the tomb, shaking off the grave-clothes, and coming back into the light of life; and that dead brother, so dear, so sorely wept, is sitting now at the table by the side of Him who said, "Come forth!" Is it hard to comprehend the warmth of her gratitude, and her yearning to honour and adore the Saviour? But in this special gift of love she reads a promise yet more excellent. This deliverance typifies to her a greater; this resurrection is the image of her own moral resurrection, for she too has heard the great "Come forth" of the great Deliverer. It is then the Saviour of mankind whom she beholds in Him; this is He whom she adores. What Christian has not the same cause to bow at the feet of Jesus? Who has not been the object of His mercy? Who has not obtained. from Him some deliverance? Where is the house of mourning into which He has not entered? Which of His disciples has not heard the voice which quickens the dead, and has not risen out of the dust of the sepulchre, where He lay buried in error and in sin? Whoever has received from His lips the words, "My son, go in peace, thy sins are forgiven thee," is bound, like Mary, to fall at His feet, so much the more overwhelmed with the greatness of the benefit as he realizes the greatness of the condemnation.

Mary was not content with meditating only on the grace received. She fixed her grateful gaze upon the person of Him who had so generously dealt with her. She loved, we are told, to sit at His feet, and in silence to learn of Him. The more she contemplated Him, the more she found Him worthy to be adored. The perfection of Christ only reveals itself by degrees. Perfect and ideal moral beauty does not make itself observed at first, because it is characterized by a calm dignity, which does not excite the attention of the superficial. It is not marked out by any striking feature standing

prominently forward, but only by the general harmony. Thus those who look at Jesus only from afar discover nothing in Him for which they should desire Him. They despise Him, and pass Him disdainfully by. But when they pause and gaze steadfastly at Him with the earnest look of love; when, like Mary, they desire to see and hear Him alone, then they discover in Him such treasures of beauty, of holiness, of love, in one word, of Divinity, that they fall at His feet and lie prostrate before Him. The contemplation of Christ leads to adoration, so much does it suffuse the soul with holy admiration. What can so inspire enthusiasm as His thrilling, grave, yet gentle accents, bearing such a seal of grandeur that human language seems transfigured on His lips? What can inspire enthusiasm like that life of sorrow and self-devotion, the one long sacrifice of pitying love? What can inspire enthusiasm like that purity, that spotless saintliness, that Divine perfection, standing out against a background of dark and hideous human crime? What can inspire enthusiasm like that patience, that meekness under insult, that silence under the piercing thorn and wrenching nail, that pardon on the cross? "Who can see, and nothing feel?" Who can behold like Mary, and not like her adore?

But there is another motive for her adoration, which the Lord Himself points out in the words, "against the day of my burying hath she kept this." The burial of Jesus Christ represents His deepest suffering, His most mysterious humiliation. It speaks of the hatred that pursued Him even to death, the taunts that were flung at Him, the jeers of His executioners, and finally the ignominy to which He was exposed as He hung on the accursed tree, a spectacle to angels and to men. Mary could not yet conceive, in all its horror, the awful scene of the death of the Son of God. But she had heard enough to know that tremendous suffering, nameless infamy was in store for Him. Had she not seen the dark looks of those Jews, who went from Bethany to

plot with Caiaphas for His death? What agony was it for her to think that that well-beloved Master was to be delivered into the hand of His enemies, to be mocked and murdered by their impious rage! What bitterness was in the very possibility! Could it then be true, that upon this earth, where He had gone about doing good, He would find only coldness, scorn, and enmity? No, it could not be. In anticipation she would condone the cruel treatment of His enemies by the warmth of her affection, and would love and adore Him for all that He was about to suffer at Jerusalem. She would honour Him the more conspicuously, if by others He was to be despised and spitted on. Therefore she came beforehand to anoint His body to the burying; "against the day of my burying," said the Master, "hath she kept this." Like her, the true Christian in every age has been the more eager to worship Jesus Christ, the more he has seen Him covered with reproach; for the passion of the Master has continued through all these eighteen centuries. As says Pascal, "He is ever agonizing, ever persecuted, ever clad in the ironic purple, ever crucified. And beholding Thee thus, O Christ, we will still fall at Thy feet, and eagerly desire to live to Thy glory. The more Thou art oppressed with griefs, the more men pass before Thee wagging the head, the more will we worship. The louder the blasphemy, the louder shall be our song! The more Thy cross is decried as folly, the more will we make it our boast to know nothing beside."

"Saviour, veiled in infamy,
Low in sorrow bowed;
Closer will I cleave to Thee,
For the scoffing crowd;
Louder shall my homage be
Than the shouts of scorn;
Lowlier will I worship Thee,
Saviour, crowned with thorn."

These sweet spices we have kept for Thy burying. Our hymns of adoration shall drown the cry of the crucifiers; and while the world parades an insolent triumph over

Thee, Thy Church at Thy feet, like Mary, shall repeat Thine eternal glory, Thy sure victory.

We have considered now what is Christian adoration, and on what it is sustained. Let us beware of thinking that it belongs exclusively to our religious edifices. Christianity has no holy places; it claims to set its seal upon our whole life. That which God wills is not that we bow our faces in the dust on certain days; it is that we lead lowly lives before Him. To break the box of ointment is to give Him that which is most precious within us: faculties, feelings, young affections—all should be brought to the feet of Jesus, and consecrated to Him with the devotion of a willing heart. This adoration ought to express itself spontaneously, impetuously, like that of Mary, unchilled by fear, unchecked by calculation. The element of adoration ought to pervade all the regions of the higher life. Why should we not in this point of view accord a special value to Christian art? It cannot indeed bring to Jesus the most precious gifts of humanity, since these are the gifts of the moral life. But it has a homage of its own to render. When poetry comprehends its mission without exaggerating it, when it offers to Christ its highest inspirations, uplifting human language by its mighty afflatus to a higher celebration of the cross, does it present no adoration? When painting, without distracting the soul from the invisible, fixes upon the canvas the pious ecstasy of a Bartolomeo, or of a Fra Angelico, and seems to have contemplated the Divine model with a holy love, does it not too adore? And in sacred music, may we not recognise the same characteristic, when its mystic harmonies are used not as enervating, siren strains, but to express the inexpressible depth of our emotions, and to uplift our praise on loftier pinions? We may none the less maintain the infinite superiority of the moral to the merely æsthetic, and boldly avow that the highest work of art is less heaven-born than one impulse of true charity; we may be none the less on our guard against its

perils; we know too well how easily it becomes sinful idolatry: but let us nevertheless admit that the gift was not bestowed on man as a snare, and that it has its part, however secondary, in the universal adoration of the Creator by the creature. Its mission is to hold in its pure transparent form, as in a vase of alabaster, all that is truly beautiful on earth, that like Mary it may pour it as sweet incense over the feet of Christ.

There is one sphere in which adoration is especially appropriate, the sphere of Christian worship. There the adoring soul finds its fullest and most solemn expression. Thus, in every age, the Church has attempted to make the worship presented in harmony with its design. There are here two rocks to be avoided, two extremes which equally falsify the nature and hinder the exercise of worship. On the one hand, there is the danger of multiplying forms to such an extent that the thing signified is lost, under the prodigality and pomp of symbols. On the other hand, worship may be so stripped of all symbolical elements, that nothing remains but the bare word of teaching or exhortation. In the one case, we have Catholicism; in the other, Puritanism; and in neither the true ideal of Christian worship. I do not deny that there are in Catholicism beautiful relics of the worship of the ancient Church, which recall the time when adoration occupied a large space in religious service, when the sacred chants, the invocations, the prayers, gave rich utterance to the Christian sentiment of a living Church. But in our day it is like a noble river, which has been suddenly ice-bound, and remains a dead, congealed mass between the shores which once it fructified with living waters. Anthem, prayer, all has been petrified; not a sigh breaks forth spontaneously, not a prayer is breathed but in an ancient form; no place is left to the free impulses of piety. Ritualism has encompassed all; the symbolism, by its scenic character, hides that which it should reveal; the gaze is too much arrested by the gorgeous representation, to rise to the invisible reality. Nor may

we forget that the creature is placed upon the altar of the Creator, and that when the precious ointment now spreads its sweet incense through the temple, it is poured most often not over the feet of the Saviour, but of His mother.

In the other forms of worship to which we alluded, the sovereign rights of God are fully recognised. Worship in spirit and in truth has chased away all idle ceremonies; but possibly too exclusive a place has been given to teaching and preaching. Perhaps, after man has been spoken to by his fellow-man, too little time is given him to speak to God, to lift up his own soul and hold communion with his Father. Perhaps too small a place is given to adoration. Perhaps also the liberty of prayer is too much forgotten, and the universal priesthood too little recognised in practice, from fear of disorder, which it would be so easy to restrain or to repress. It is certain that attention is now aroused on this point. The Christian soul is imperfectly satisfied. Hence, in search of that which it lacks, it oftens wanders into devious paths, not without danger. Whence comes this strange revival of the taste for forms and ceremonies, genuflexions and crucifixes, in a certain portion of the evangelical Church, if not from these new, or rather from these old cravings, newly re-awakened? And however different in outward manifestation, is it not the same current which draws others along the strait paths of sectarianism, and leads them, under pretext of revering the freedom of the Spirit, to introduce into their worship the most lamentable lawlessness?

These are signs not to be ignored. They contain grave warnings for the contemporary Church. She must be fain to own that she has not reached the ultimatum of Christian worship in any of her sections; for if it were to be found in any one, the majority of Christian souls would soon acknowledge it. It is of the highest importance to seek on true principles the solution of this question, so closely connected with the progress of piety. Where can

we find these principles more luminously legible than in the gospel history which we are now considering? From the spontaneity of Mary's tribute, we plainly gather that the multiplication of rites will clog the springs of the Christian soul, and adoration will become petrified: by the beauty of the expression of love to the Saviour, which we have admired in the sister of Lazarus, we are raised above the scruples of puritanism, which repudiates all symbols.

But one thought comes out more prominently than any other; it is that adoration is possible, only when the presence of Christ is felt as a reality. If we did but truly behold Him with the eye of faith, what would not our worship become, even under the imperfect conditions of the present? Let us suppose that we see Jesus Christ in very truth as Mary saw Him; what would not the prayer of a Christian assembly be? It would be a box of very precious ointment broken over His feet, shedding abroad the love of all faithful souls. And the hymn, the strain which bears our aspirations heavenward, what would that not be, if we felt it rising indeed to the throne of Christ? Still more, what would not the holy mystery of the Communion be, if we saw the Lord seated at the eucharistic table, as Mary saw Him seated at the table of Lazarus? Is not this the very holy of holies of our Christian worship? Ah! how stand in the presence of the Crucified, in the full revelation of His infinite self-sacrificing charity; how feel the constraining arms of His everlasting love around us,—and not yield ourselves to Him, body, soul, and spirit, a living sacrifice? Christian, for thee the scene at Bethany is ever renewed in all its reality and beauty. The Christ is here; the precious vase of spikenard is not wanting. What wouldst thou more? Oh that the house may be filled with the odour of the ointment!

We cannot close without alluding to one of the great defects in our mode of worship—the rare celebration of the Lord's Supper. In our opinion, this ought to be the

heart of our worship. Nothing would make us more sensible of the presence of Christ. In the primitive Church, during almost three centuries, it was observed daily. Before going forth to the labours of the day, the Christians met to break bread together. How beautiful was that worship of the second century, of which the monuments have come down to us! How large a place in it was given to adoration! As soon as the Church was assembled, these words were heard: "Lift up your hearts; let us worship the Lord, for this is right." And the voice of thanksgiving rose, rich, full, overflowing, presenting, as in one golden sheaf upon the altar of God, all His benefits of providence and of redemption. Then, after the words instituting the Supper had been read, the cup passed from hand to hand. Prayer arose anew to God for the outpouring of His Spirit upon the Church, "that we may laud and magnify Thee in Thy Son Jesus Christ, through whom be power and glory to Thee in Thy holy Church, both now and ever." * After the elements had been distributed, the people knelt before God, and with one voice said, "Thy people have bowed the head before Thee, and have broken the hardness of the heart and the flesh." †

Was not the Church, thus prostrate before God, another Mary at the feet of Christ? and did not the perfume of the broken vase flow forth afresh in those prayers without ceasing, which rose from the glowing hearts of the Christian martyrs? We have possibly a larger knowledge of the truth than they, a wider range of experience. The Church of the nineteenth century has made noble conquests. She has a rich and fertile literature. Her works cover the earth. She has just and clear views as to her organization. But who will give her the heart of Mary, sister of Lazarus, her love for the Saviour, and that box

* "Ut Te celebrent et laudent, in Filio Jesu Christo, in quo Tibi laus et potentia in sancta Ecclesia, et nunc, et semper, et in secula seculorum."—*Ecclesiæ Alex. Monum.*, Bunsen, *Antenicæn.* iii. 116.

† Idem, p. 121.

of ointment poured upon His feet? Who will teach her to adore as the Church of the first and second centuries adored?

Of no grace does she stand more in need; none should she more earnestly seek.

The Jubilee of the French Reformation.

THE JUBILEE OF THE FRENCH REFORMATION.

"And Elijah took his mantle, and wrapped it together, and smote the waters, and they were divided hither and thither, so that they two went over on dry ground. And it came to pass, when they were gone over, that Elijah said unto Elisha, Ask what I shall do for thee, before I be taken away from thee. And Elisha said, I pray thee, let a double portion of thy spirit be upon me. And he said, Thou hast asked a hard thing: nevertheless, if thou see me when I am taken from thee, it shall be so unto thee; but if not, it shall not be so. And it came to pass, as they still went on, and talked, that, behold, there appeared a chariot of fire, and horses of fire, and parted them both asunder; and Elijah went up by a whirlwind into heaven. And Elisha saw it, and he cried, My father, my father, the chariot of Israel, and the horsemen thereof. And he saw him no more: and he took hold of his own clothes, and rent them in two pieces. He took up also the mantle of Elijah that fell from him, and went back, and stood by the bank of Jordan; and he took the mantle of Elijah that fell from him, and smote the waters, and said, Where is the Lord God of Elijah? and when he also had smitten the waters, they parted hither and thither: and Elisha went over. And when the sons of the prophets which were to view at Jericho saw him, they said, The spirit of Elijah doth rest on Elisha. And they came to meet him, and bowed themselves to the ground before him."—2 KINGS ii. 8–15.

WHEN, in the times of the great Roman persecutions, a faithful soldier of Christ had sealed his confession with the glorious death of a martyr, the Church, which reverently laid his ashes in the catacombs, was wont to mark her love and admiration for the Christian hero by a symbolic representation rudely traced upon the rocky wall. The grandest, most impressive image which she chose for the expression of these feelings was taken from the story of the translation of Elijah, which forms the text for our discourse to-day. Thus, in the catacombs of St. Agnes, above the stone which sealed the martyr's grave, an un-

known hand pictured the prophet's chariot of fire, caught up to heaven, a sublime image of the glory of the confessor, a glory so much the greater in proportion to the foregoing shame. The Church, in her faith, saw triumph where her enemies saw only the lowest ignominy; and while the Roman populace insulted the corpse of one who to her seemed the most vile of criminals, the eye of the Church beheld that wretched criminal borne in a chariot of fire into the heavens, and welcomed by the hosanna of the angels. Like Elisha, she saw him as he was taken up, and lay low to receive the falling mantle, that spirit of immutable constancy and ardent love to the Master which had animated the brother in arms, thus fallen before his comrades in the fight.

With the same feelings, we desire to-day to revive the memory of our fathers on this anniversary. While we behold them dying like the first Christians, we seem also to see them ascending up into glory, and their martyrdom is to us as the fiery chariot of the prophet. This glorification of the great witnesses of truth is lawful when it is kept within bounds, when it is not suffered to become idolatry, when, in short, it is a glorification of the God whose power is magnified in human weakness. The Church of our fathers, the noble Reformed Church of the sixteenth century, shines in our eyes with the more brilliance because she has been so covered with injury and scorn. The more she is downtrodden, maligned, wounded, decimated, the higher she rises on her triumphal way. Under the crown of thorns her true royalty shows resplendent; and we watch her as, bearing the marks of her crucified Master, she passes through the heavenly gates, which lift up their heads for those whom the world treats as the off-scouring of all things.

Nay, more. This elevation to glory of the confessors of truth is not reserved for heaven alone. In the course of time it is realized also upon earth. History is an anticipation of the final judgment of God. The martyrs of one age are the heroes of the next. True greatness, at

first despised and slandered, vindicates its rightful place. The impure vapours which had exhaled from the morasses of humanity disperse, and the star of goodness beams on the horizon. There is a crown for the martyr even in the present life. It is true that those who build the sepulchres of the prophets would have probably put them to death, had the martyrs been of their day. Nevertheless, this glorification of the saints is an award of eternal justice; and if it is not yet fully accorded to our fathers, if they have still implacable enemies, these must be sought among men so mean that it is an honour to be disowned by them. In a general way, our fathers do receive the homage of this generation; and how deeply should pious gratitude and profound admiration mingle with that homage in their sons.

But to admire our noble ancestry is not enough. It was not enough for Elisha to be present at the glorification of Elijah. If he desired to behold that solemn sight, it was not merely that his soul might be filled with enthusiasm. When the prophet said to him at the hour of parting, "Ask what I shall do for thee, before I be taken away from thee," Elisha answered, "I pray thee let a double portion of thy spirit come upon me." And when the master had been caught up before his eyes, he did not stand long in ravished contemplation; he bowed himself to the earth, and took up the prophet's mantle—the sacred sign of his work. Let us do likewise, and, after beholding joyfully the triumph of our fathers, let us bow our knees; let us gather to us their mantle, and ask of God *to give us a double portion of their spirit,* for it was indeed the Spirit of God.

To inquire what was this spirit, with a view to making it our own, is the purpose of this discourse. In the considerations which follow, I have in view not any one section of evangelical Protestantism, but that Protestantism as a whole. This jubilee is in truth the festival of all the children of the French Reformation, and I do not suppose that any will deny to our independent

Protestant Churches this glorious parentage. To stumble at this would be to repudiate the very spirit of the Reformation, for the work of our fathers consisted primarily in substituting true unity for the false unity of the Church, the unity of constraint. They proclaimed the sacred rights of Christian liberty, which is bound by no fetters to a historic Church; nay, they did more than proclaim these rights, they maintained and vindicated them. They showed that there is another succession, and another genealogy, than that which is to be traced in outward forms. They taught the world that if there is a true catholicity, it is that of the invisible Church, which gathers its members among the true Christians of all the visible Churches, and is above them all, as the ideal is above the real. Henceforward there is no one visible and dominant Church, on which we are all bound to depend, as on a mother, charged to bear us to heaven in her arms. The mother Church is the Church invisible, which is composed of all true believers, and is the pure and spotless bride of Christ. And this mother Church has not one only daughter; she has many; and the various visible Churches are all sisters. It is true, however, that the link which unites the various branches of the family may be more or less close. It is very binding when they trace a common origin in the same great religious movement. On this ground it is that our independent Churches, no less than those which are established, claim a right in the French Reformation. The heritage is a spiritual one. It is not an affair of parchment, like the title deeds to worldly possessions; it is a lineage of thought and principle. Wherever the principles of the French Reformation are found in vigorous exercise, there are its children. Therefore is this festival our festival also; it is that of all our reformed French Churches. We embrace them all in this discourse; on behalf of all, we would inquire what was the spirit of our fathers. May our God breathe upon us the same spirit, like the breath of reviving spring, which quickens the torpid sap and fructifies *the hardened* earth.

Imagine yourselves, my brethren, to be living three centuries ago, on the 25th of May, 1559. Mark that humble house in the faubourg St. Germain, the most obscure corner of Paris. Within are a few men, simply attired, of austere appearance, gathered around a folio copy of the Holy Scriptures. No one in the noisy city, no one in the brilliant and dissolute court of the Valois, takes any heed of what they are doing there so quietly. If their employment was suspected, a furious crowd would soon mob the house, seize the men as if they were public enemies, and sacrifice them to its wild fanaticism; or if the little council was reported to the magistrates, its members would be quickly summoned to appear before that fiery tribunal, specially appointed to examine into cases of religion, and the Most Christian king would have reason to order a procession some days later, and to go himself, taper in hand, to the place where Protestant Christians are burnt.

From the stand-point of the enemies of a pure gospel, nothing could be more reasonable; for these few men are the representatives of the French Reformation, which is coming into being, and this little conclave is the first synod of those young Churches. This day is a high day; it marks the end of the period of formation, it inaugurates the era in which the Reformation, having attained to full consciousness, proceeds to consolidation and organization. Let us rapidly pass in review the antecedents of this memorable day.

The Reformation was not in France an importation from Germany; it arose spontaneously. For a long time all earnest hearts had been longing for a religious renovation; they shuddered under the yoke of Rome; bound by long-wonted reverence and fettered by tradition, they yet suffered from a secret restlessness, and those who did not find refuge in a wild mysticism stretched eager arms into the future. The horizon was on all sides coloured with the prophetic rays of the coming day. One presentiment, one expectation, was in

all Christian hearts; they were absorbed in one pursuit. The book of God had been re-opened, it had been meditated upon under the pressure of those great needs, which seemed new, but which were in truth as old as the human conscience. At Paris, a professor of philosophy and of mathematics, Lefèvre d'Etaples, had read in the sacred pages the same word which Luther was to read some years later in the Bible of his convent, and to clothe with yet more brilliant demonstration. That Divine utterance was the watchword of St. Paul, "The just shall live by faith." It was the good tidings once preached by the fishermen of the lake of Galilee, and which, reverberating from one end of the world to the other, kindled in every place beacon fires of joy and life and purity. In the sixteenth century, as in the first, it was a winged word, which flew from north to south, from east to west. It was at first the secret charm, and as it were the hidden marrow, of the evangelical preaching, which was still heard in Catholic pulpits, as the preaching of Christ had been heard in the synagogues of Judæa. Favoured at one time by the protection of Bishop Briçonnet, it pursued its way pacifically in the diocese of Meaux, thanks to Lefèvre d'Etaples and to Farel. But it is not the destiny of truth thus to tread for long an even path. Soon proscribed, it is, by its most powerful representatives, to shake off the dust of its feet against the Church which disowns and anathematizes it; but it is to go forward with a new and heavenly impulse. Faint and persecuted, it advances through a thousand perils with unexampled rapidity of progress. It would seem as if a holy contagion were being propagated, spread by the wind in every direction. Lefèvre d'Etaples, and soon after him Olivetan, translated the sacred Scriptures; pious pedlars conveyed the precious merchandise into all hands. The fountain of living waters is opened, and every one that is athirst may come and drink. In every rank of society, pure truth finds its adherents. The gospel is read and understood in the hut of the peasant, in the mansion of

the noble, and most of all in the simple homes of that honest *bourgeoisie*, which has been perhaps the truest glory of France. The very sister of the king, the literary and graceful Princess Margaret, is won to the truth; and the psalms, translated into the vulgar tongue, are sung on many an evening in the Pré aux Clercs by a noble company.

And yet the most violent persecution has not ceased to warn and threaten. The knightly king seems roused to rivalry by his dark Spanish compeer, and equals him in fanatic cruelty. The stakes still hold their victims in fiery fetters; the purest blood has flowed in streams; hateful edicts have followed one another; and, as in the worst days of Roman tyranny, information has been fed on confiscation. The mistress of two kings has been seen urging them on to persecution, for the sake of the spoil of the victims; and it seems at one time as if the Inquisition, so hateful to the genius of France, were about to be established in the kingdom. But nothing impedes the spread of a truth when its time has come. It might be said that it flows on in floods with the blood shed to quench it, and rushes the more impetuously forward for all barriers. In all the provinces, as well as in the capital, the new beliefs take root. At the gates of France, Geneva becomes a city of refuge and a nursery of apostles, and God raises up one of the greatest Christians and greatest minds of the modern world to be the head of the French Reformation. His was an austere genius, and, in spite of all that appeared to the contrary, a burning heart; he spread abroad through all the Churches the treasures of his thoughts and affections, while around himself he governed a democracy, at first undisciplined, and moulded a whole city to his own image and likeness; indomitable in energy, indefatigable in his intense activity, great in faith, great in knowledge, great in the gift Divine of moral command, the first pastor, the first theologian, and the first writer of his age and country, to which he bequeathed the instrument, by him

made supple, of a language nervous and precise; the new Moses of a new Israel coming up out of Egypt, he engraved the doctrine of the Reformation with a pen of iron in an immortal book, which was for a long time to the Reformed Church as her tables of Sinai; a Moses, fallible undoubtedly, and yielding in more than one respect to the conscience enslaving prejudices of his time and even of his worst enemies, yet after all laying down the principles of all lawful liberties, and ever filled, even in his errors, with purest love for truth and for Christ. You have anticipated me in the name of—Calvin.

This period of the history of the French Reformation has a beauty without alloy. There is as yet no admixture of politics with religion, no armed resistance. The first days of the Church are come again. The history reads like a continuation of the Acts of the Apostles. There is the same firmness, the same glorying in afflictions, the same irresistible spread of the truth which maketh free. In the year 1559, in more than one part of the kingdom, churches formed themselves spontaneously on the apostolic model. Similar institutions arose out of similar religious needs. These humble churches had their elders, their pastors and deacons. They themselves, according to their right, chose their spiritual leaders; and often, when they could not find a man of faith who was also a man of learning, they fixed their choice upon a lowly believer who had edified them, let him be wool-carder or merchant. But these scattered companies felt the need of connection, of Christian union. Many questions arose; the times became more and more critical; attacked from without, they were also in peril from many a nascent error within. Persecution threatened to burst upon them with new fury; it was needful to prepare, for presentation to the king, a solemn and authentic declaration of the faith of the new churches. For all these reasnos, and very certainly under the direct influence of Calvin's advice, the first synod was decided on at Poictiers, in a conference of the pastors of the

country, at which Chandieu, one of the pastors of the church at Paris, was present; and the synod was opened in that city on the 25th of May, 1559, in the upper room to which I introduced you at the commencement of this discourse. We have there, my brethren, an authentic representation of the Church of our fathers in its noblest period. It is therefore by this first synodical assembly that I shall try to characterize the spirit which animated them, that spirit of which we, like Elisha, desire to receive a double portion.

It was, first of all, a spirit of faith, of firm belief. To be convinced that the Reformation was not a revolt of the reason, a conspiracy of proud philosophers, I have only to contemplate those men, met together in that humble dwelling. For what cause have they braved so many dangers? Why have they come from all parts of France? Is it merely to discuss together some problems, or to amalgamate their doubts? No, for such ends none are found ready to brave death. Such discussions are held in houses of feasting; and while the cup goes round, men speculate at ease and afar from danger, like Cicero and his friends at Tusculum. Men do not risk their heads for metaphysical hypotheses or fine drawn scepticism.

Were these men thus met to proclaim the freedom of inquiry, the right of man to hold any belief at will? No, my brethren; they would not have dared so much to gain so little, and the world would not have been stirred to opposition by a cause so slight. Free inquiry, left to itself, is not a religion, and it was not a novelty in the sixteenth century. The Renaissance had proclaimed and practised it with the prudence which always characterizes speculation, when neither the heart nor conscience is directly involved. If Luther had brought from his cell the doctrine pure and simple of free inquiry, if Lefèvre d'Etaples and Calvin had promulgated nothing more than this, there would have been no record following of either stake or Church; no fervid enthusiasm would have been kindled, nor any burning enmity; and not one of the men

of that first synod would have taken one step, or braved one peril, in such a cause. If they came to Paris, bearing heaviest fatigues and braving gravest dangers, to meet hard by the place where the ashes of their brethren were still smouldering, it was that they had at heart a deep, religious faith, and knew themselves to be the bearers of a Divine truth. This is the ground of their being, the foundation stone of their churches. On the same stone those churches still rise day by day; for it they live, for it they will die. It is not a purely intellectual truth, an ingenious theory, a system; it is the truth, truth old yet ever new, the central truth of the gospel, that which binds and looses, which saves and sanctifies; the truth of free pardon, that of which Jesus spoke when He said "I am the truth." It is not of their invention; they found it in the Divine book which holds it, and which has been at length unsealed to them. They received it of God, and therefore their faith in it cannot be shaken. They are met together to confess it in the name of their churches, and a clear and categorical confession of their faith will be the first result of their synod. With what veneration should we not regard this first confession of our fathers, on which they set the sacred seal of their own suffering! If we cannot make it absolutely our own, just on account of its peculiar adaptedness to the circumstances which called it forth, it yet contains no less that foundation of doctrine and of fact, which for eighteen centuries has been the substance of Christianity. For ourselves, we prefer a thousand times the formulas of our fathers to the current orthodoxy of later years, an orthodoxy cramped by all the narrowness of the theology of the seventeenth century. They had far more of breadth and wisdom; in them we trace the great mind of Calvin. But these formulas are not themselves immortal, on various points they do violence to Christian feeling, and it is obvious that many of them were sharpened into weapons of warfare. Nevertheless, if this form of confession is transitory, like all that is of man's work, its basis is

truly of God and indestructible as the everlasting gospel. We find in it that essence, that soul of a vigorous Christianity, which outlives the body. If then we admit that this first confession does not hold good for us in its integrity, we yet recognise no less its enduring substance in so far as it reproduces revealed truth. And that which abides is the great example given us by our fathers, in confessing their faith and in showing their conviction that the Church is the pillar and ground of the truth, the great witness for Jesus Christ in the world, and that she has no other rights than those derived from such a clear and explicit confession, which excludes all that is contradictory or in opposition to it. Our fathers held one ineradicable prejudice; they could not comprehend how the Church could be a combination of paradoxes, and that the yea and nay upon essential points had an equal right within her. Under the force of this prejudice they assembled in synod; and the first synod, minus the confession of faith, is a nullity. Let us remember this, and not thrust into the shade the most important act of the solemn assembly we this day commemorate.

These men of faith were at the same time men of culture. Among the members of the first synod, you would have met with more than one pastor who had found time in his militant life to become an erudite theologian, deeply learned in the Scriptures. If you desire to know what value the French Reformation set on religious knowledge, let me remind you of the solemn institution of the Academy at Geneva—that nursery of martyr theologians.

On the 5th of June, 1559, the entire town was assembled in the cathedral of St. Peter, and before that vast assembly Calvin delivered a discourse in which he enlarged eloquently on the necessity of severe studies. The statutes of the new Academy were read by a councillor of state. Theodore de Beza presented in Latin the apology of this important creation, and Calvin concluded with a prayer. The next day the courses

commenced, and the great reformer undertook the most important. It is generally admitted that he was without an equal in Switzerland or France as a deep and keen theologian, as a nervous and forcible dialectician, as an exegete at once learned and profitable, apt in fixing with marvellous clearness the sense of Scripture, and in showing the connection of ideas. Theological science was carried very far by our fathers; their works were considerable, and on many points, while humbly submitting to the Divine authority of Scripture, they showed a wise independence. They never evinced that contempt for systematic religion, which has too often been in favour in later times. They certainly did not desire a science, falsely so called, which is only mental curiosity or the rebellion of a proud spirit. They did not admit the possibility of being a theologian and yet not a Christian. They thought that faith alone leads to the understanding of things Divine; but they never advocated what is commonly called the simplicity of the faith, which most frequently means only a faith without reason, in opposition to the broad consideration of theology. They never sang the praises of holy ignorance. They never sanctioned the fatal prejudice, that a fair examination of questions is fraught with peril. If they admitted that the ministry of the word may, in certain exceptional cases, be imposed by the unanimous choice of a church on a man without intellectual culture, they desired that a severe theological preparation should be the rule for the pastorate. They thus took their place at the head of their age in all respects, and it was thus they came to exercise over it an influence so powerful and important.

But I hasten to say further, that neither their firm belief nor their learning would have availed to secure their triumph, if they had not impressed the world by their holiness. The reformers of the Church began by reforming themselves, and their sanctified life was the most potent apology of their doctrine. The great Christian ideal, which had grown defaced or dim, reappeared in

them and shone forth luminously against the dark background of universal immorality. You know, my brethren, the condition of the Church and of society at that time. The Renaissance was an age of universal intoxication. Europe, scarcely emerged from the middle ages and still retaining a large measure of barbarism, found itself suddenly transported into the midst of a brilliant civilization; the discovery of the New World sent a flood of gold over the Old; art multiplied again her marvellous creations, and Greece seemed to start from her tomb, to lay a continent once more under her pagan enchantments. Thus the instincts of barbarism met the refinements of civilization, and found a new and stimulating element. Hence the strange juxtaposition of rudest passion and most polished speech; hence the mingling of voluptuous ease and fierce atrocity. Hence those terrible massacres following on the track of feasts. St. Bartholomew was the morrow after the ball at the court of the Valois. The man of the Renaissance is a savage in velvet doublet, who, instead of a poisoned arrow, carries a finely wrought dagger, and who is suddenly set down to a magnificent feast, where all his instincts, the noble and the vile, the poetic and the animal, can be satisfied alike. Is it surprising that the feast is often turned into an orgy, and even a bloody one? In short, the sixteenth century is a time of stormy youth, the renewed youth of a society, which has suddenly seen spring open the doors of the cloister, in which, during the middle ages, it had been imprisoned but not transformed. These doors open on all sides at once; they open upon pleasure and learning, upon art and wealth. The new generation rushes impetuously forth in all these directions. It works wonders of glory and of shame; the result is an age of strange contrasts. And lo! suddenly in the midst of this brilliant and corrupt society appears an austere, holy company, practising all Christian virtues, full also of vigour, a vigour which is to nourish the greatest conceptions and foster the most fruitful activity. There was nothing strained, nothing

petty, in this piety of our fathers. It flowed fresh from the fountain, hollowing out a free, broad channel for itself. It is distinguished by a chivalrous character which is its charm. If the world then saw the renaissance of ancient paganism, it saw also the renaissance of primitive Christianity, giving dignity to families, inspiration to souls, firmness and gentleness, heroism and charity combined, to the life and character. We know it well by that mark of the cross, the blood-stained cross of the Master, which the saints have always borne to "fill up that which is behind of the afflictions of Christ in the flesh."

This was the spirit, my brethren, which, more than any other, animated our fathers; it was the spirit of martyrdom. Those men, gathered in that upper chamber, set their signature to their confession of faith, and most of them signed it with their blood. Already, in anticipation, the reformed faith had received this consecration; how many believers had died before that day for the truth, to which our fathers then gave solemn expression! How beautiful, in this point of view, is the history of our French Reformed Church! Is there in the world one that numbers so many confessors? In this respect pre-eminently has it exercised the universal priesthood, the priesthood which unites in the same person the victim and the priest—the priesthood of self-sacrifice for Christ. Women, children, young men, men in the vigour of their age, old men, persons of every condition, wool-carders and councillors of state, generals and soldiers, peasants and men of gentle blood,—martyrdom levelled all ages and all ranks, or rather let us say it raised all to the same height of dignity. Truly may we say with the Epistle to the Hebrews, "They were tortured, not accepting deliverance, that they might obtain a better resurrection. They had trials of cruel mockings and scourgings, yea, moreover, of bonds and imprisonment; they were stoned, they were sawn asunder, were tempted, were slain with the sword; they wandered about in sheepskins and goatskins, being destitute, afflicted, tor-

mented; (of whom the world was not worthy;) they wandered in deserts and in mountains and in dens and caves of the earth." But in these deserts and caves, in prison and at the stake, they were not alone. Jesus Christ was with them, and they knew the greatest of all joys which earth can give, the joy of suffering for Him, with Him. He was with them; He spoke by their mouth, and therefore the words they uttered were words of such Divine simplicity, and have the seal of a Divine inspiration.

The whole religious life of the reformed received from their situation a character of solemnity, which revivified in their experience the life of the upper room at Jerusalem. They must ever be ready to be offered. To read the holy book, to sing psalms, to pray in the family, was in a manner to tread the first steps of the altar. To meet secretly to worship together in some private dwelling, was to be in danger of a rough dispersion by the populace, such as really occurred in Paris in 1558. The mob burst into the house where worship was being held, and massacred all those whom the magistrates could not rescue from their violence, to reserve them for the more cold-blooded but not less certain vengeance of the State. Every act of piety bore the seal of martyrdom. After such an education, we do not wonder that our fathers were found ready for the sacrifice. They lived in daily expectation of it; for them the fiery end was the crown and consecration of a life-long martyrdom. Hence that cry of the mother at the sight of her dying martyr-son, "Christ and His cross for ever," rose from all hearts, as the flame kindled round the stake. And not only did martyrdom thus raise to an ever sublimer height the standard of piety, it also exercised an extraordinary power over the adversaries of the Reformation. It heaped coals of fire on the heads of the persecutors; it pursued them with a terrible remorse. Henry II. could never forget the calm gaze of one Christian who was burnt with slow fire before him, and never removed his eyes from the king's face. That gaze of the

victim met the persecutor everywhere, and pierced him like a sword. It rested for more than two centuries upon old France, and more than one Saul found in it the light from heaven, which made him fall to the ground on the way to Damascus. Then martyrdom always has, and will always have, a mysterious attraction. In a sceptical age, a faith for which men die inspires trust in those who crave for certainty. Thus the blood of every martyr-Christian will surely prove the seed of a glorious harvest, in the rapid growth of the Church; martyrdom is a great missionary. On every ground therefore it is easy to understand that persecution was one of the best blessings given to the Church of our fathers. In the midst of the furnace of fiery trial she took as her motto that word, descriptive of old of the burning bush, "I burn, but I am not consumed;" *Comburo, sed non consumor.* She was not mistaken. The stake kindled to destroy the French Reformation in the sixteenth century was indeed a burning bush. The place is holy: let us take off our shoes and adore; "the Lord is here."

Our fathers, in dying, not only served the truth; they also served the cause of liberty, the noblest of all liberties, the mother of all others—liberty of conscience. I know that, with rare exceptions, even they did not understand it, I know that the reformers shared in the views of the sixteenth century as to the duty of the magistrate to protect the truth. I hear alas the name that you whisper, the name of Servetus. I find the trace of that error in the confession of faith of the first synod. I know it all; and yet I maintain that liberty of conscience never had defenders mightier than our martyrs. They affirmed it by their death, and no argument can be so strong as their suffering. They taught tyranny that there is a limit beyond which it cannot go: it may kill the body, but from the crumbling ashes the soul escapes free and victorious. A man who dies for his faith is conqueror over him who slays him. The Reformation has carried off for two centuries this crown of victory of the soul

over force. It introduced into the modern world freedom of conscience, and, in spite of its own restrictions and its own inconsistent reasoning, it has brought into action that which will break like tow whatever bonds may yet be laid upon it.

We should rejoice, my brethren, would time permit, to set forth all the holy liberality, which marked the work of our fathers. We could illustrate this without going beyond that scene of the first small synod, by a careful study of the noble organization then given to the Church. We would show you this character of true liberality in the proclamation of the universal priesthood, in the right of election entrusted to all the faithful, in the large introduction of the lay element into the heart of ecclesiastical power, in the whole aspect and bearing of that constitution, which makes our Church not a school which has a cleric for a pedagogue, not a confused crowd which must be swayed, but a religious representative democracy, a society of believers, choosing its own pastors, elders, delegates to the synod, and which knows how to be free because it knows how to obey. We would gladly show you the close bond which thus unites wise liberty with firm discipline, while it excludes the unbelieving world from intrusion into the ecclesiastical democracy, there to appoint its too faithful representatives.

We should like to dwell on the elevated spirituality, —always the distinctive seal of the reformers, which appears in their confession of faith, asserting its infinite superiority to all sacramental materialism, and is no less evident in their simple and severe lives, and in their worship, so boldly spiritualistic if I may so express it. This spirituality is also nobly manifest in the circumstances of the great act, the anniversary of which we this day celebrate.

Those few men, met in secret in that humble dwelling, were the council of the French Reformation. What! shall that be called a council? says the man of form and tradition. Where is the stately temple to

receive it? Where are the authorized representatives of Christianity, its priests and bishops, invested with the insignia of their dignity? Where are they? I confess, we have here no cathedral, no pontiff; and yet the true council of the sixteenth century is not that which is about to meet at Trent, with its cardinal legates, its archbishops, its heads of orders, with its grand paraphernalia, and with the support of most powerful princes to give weight to its anathemas; no, the true council is that unpretending synod, which, under the eye of God and at the feet of the stake, signs with much prayer the confession of a truth which the world is ever crucifying, but which as often rises again from the dead. At Trent the papacy presides. At the synod of Paris the presidency is that of the word of God; and while all the glory of man withers like the grass, the word of our God abideth for ever. The true council is there, where the Spirit of the Lord is; and the Spirit of the Lord breathes within those unadorned walls, while it stirs not beneath the cathedral dome, where are seated the fathers of Trent. O holy spirituality! holy liberty! mighty faith! heroic lives! deaths yet more heroic! glorious company of martyrs! fiery chariot of Elijah! the chariot of Israel and the horsemen thereof! mantle of the prophet, descend upon us! O our God, give to us a double portion of the spirit of our fathers.

How much do we need it, my brethren! To us also a great task has been assigned. We have been placed by God in an age, which as loudly calls for true Christianity as did the sixteenth century. What, I ask you, would have been the fate of that century, if the strong barrier of the Reformation had not stood firm against the swelling floods of its corruption? What would it have become without that preserving salt, the strong savour of which prevented the dissolution of a paganized society? And what would our nineteenth century be without the gospel? Like the sixteenth, it has seen a great increase of man's power upon earth. The ground

has opened to pour forth vast treasures. Science has multiplied its miracles, and civilization has carried its refinements and its luxury far and wide. But at the same time how daring is the vaunt of materialism! What a rising, roaring tide of sinful passions and desires surges round us! The nineteenth century is great in learning, in industry, in splendour; but it believes not in God; and if it grows accustomed to live without God it will soon be without hope, like that old world of heathendom branded by St. Paul. What would it be without the gospel? and what, especially, would our country be without it? All who know her truly know that her most urgent need is a religious reformation. Nothing else can save her. In the sixteenth century, she repudiated that form of religion which could best have developed by discipline the richest of her gifts, and which would most surely have led her to liberty. Oh, if thou hadst known, even thou in this thy day, we are tempted to say, the things that belonged to thy peace, if thou hadst chosen the religion of conscience, what might not have been thine history! Thou wouldst have lost none of thy native grace, none of thy ready generosity, none of thy quick and keen intelligence, thy promptitude in action, thy valiant courage. But thou wouldst have gained that gravity and earnestness which has always been thy lack, that sense of duty, that respect for law, that love of the right, without which there is no solid basis for a nation's life; and above all thou wouldst have gained that knowledge of the true, unadulterated gospel, which would have preserved thee from so many fatal misconceptions and so much scepticism. It is certain that now, without a religious reformation which may reach the conscience, this noble vessel of France, floating without an anchor between puerile idolatry and atheism, will drift away ever farther and farther from the port to which all her best aspirations tend. We hope that all who believe firmly in Christ, and who realize this situation of our country, will strive together unceasingly for a

revival of religion among us. We hold out to all the hand of fellowship; but we are none the less convinced that this work is primarily incumbent on those who possess a pure gospel. It was the work attempted by our fathers. It should be the work of the sons, a vast work, a work impossible to our feebleness; therefore, O God, give to us a double portion of their spirit.

In asking for this boon, we do not ask for greater zeal, greater devotion than theirs, for in these respects it would seem impossible to surpass them; but what we ask is the same spirit, freed from all that may have restrained its action in their day. We shall not imitate our fathers by copying them; on the contrary, we should thus produce the very reverse of their work. They were reformers; to follow their example is to become reformers ourselves, that is, to carry on the Reformation, but in the same direction and in the same spirit.

We want their spirit of faith, of firm belief. We do not want to reproduce their entire theology. Only those who have not read their formularies venture to express such a desire. All human theology is incomplete and perfectible. We have not then, like the Jews of the decline, to gather up every jot and tittle of their forms, so that not one shall be missing. The nineteenth century has, like the sixteenth, the right of direct communication with Holy Scripture; and the treasury of the householder, which contains new things and old, is not closed to us. As far as a rigid confessionalism, a traditional bigotry, is in question, we disclaim it. But if, instead of human creeds, the point at issue is the eternal truth confessed and declared by our fathers, the truth of man's lost estate, of salvation by the Christ of God, of the sacrifice of the cross, and of justification by faith, then Lord we say, give us a double portion of their spirit. Give us their immutable belief, their strong and joyful faith, in these feeble days of doubt. Strike into our Churches a salutary fear; make them comprehend that in the day when they shall have re-

nounced faith in Thine adorable Son, when they shall have ceased to say, "We will know nothing but Jesus Christ and him crucified," in that day evangelical Protestantism will have ceased to live. Give them courage to unfurl anew the banner of the Church's confession, and on it to inscribe the name of Christ.

We need the clear thought of our fathers. Let an indolent darkening of knowledge prevail among us, let grave problems be left to the treatment of scepticism, let Christian thought be strangled by the cords of tradition; and it will soon be seen how great will be the loss to positive faith. Those who doubt of this little dream how grave the peril is, and have but a poor conception of the grand and glorious questions which are placed before us. Lord, give us in double measure the spirit of our fathers; give us their wisdom, alike deep and humble, as wide and solid as it was filled with the spirit of piety; give us their spirit, but more tolerant, more apt to distinguish between the fundamental and the secondary points of doctrine. Give us that science which bends over the Scriptures, not like the scribe, to count the letters, but like the worshipper of the God who is a spirit, to seek there for the living truth which is in Christ Jesus, and there to find the key of all the problems, over which, without it, we pore in vain.

We want the same liberality and spirituality that was in the spirit of our fathers. Let us be on our guard against those unhappy reactions, in the acceptation of sacerdotal ideas and sacramental materialism, which our day has called forth. Let us give a constantly widening scope to the lay element; this is the best means of consolidating the evangelical ministry. Let us establish the Church more and more firmly on her true basis of living and personal faith. Let us remember that liberty without holiness is anarchy, that it is the terrible anomaly of a Church which opens her doors to the world and permits the world to choose her leaders, and even to ascend her pulpits, the better to do battle with itself. Let us

remember that if the Reformed Church was a well ordered democracy, it was thanks to her discipline, thanks to that high barrier which she raised against the encroaching floods of the unconverted masses. In this age of ecclesiastical fictions, in the bosom of a mendacious Christianity, give us, O God, doubly the spirit of our fathers, and speed the day when all our Churches, restored to their normal condition and carrying on the work of the reformers, shall take the position of the primitive Church, and become again holy companies of professors, a mission camp in the world. Hasten the day when, separated at length from the state, laying aside for ever those weapons of force in the religious warfare, which in the sixteenth century were still held to be in lawful use, they shall depend solely upon their invisible Captain, and shall act the more influentially upon society, as they are the less confounded with it.

We want our fathers' spirit of holiness. Let us step forth, for it is high time, from our inconsistent Christianity. So little has it of heroism or grandeur, that it is scarcely strong enough to excite either hatred on the one hand, or sympathetic admiration on the other. The men of our generation pass before us, and never pause, for they see nothing extraordinary in us. They would pause before holiness, perhaps to revile it, but possibly to admire. O pale, colourless, petty piety, we are weary of thee, and to thy God thou art a weariness. Oh that He would give us again the solemn earnestness, the ideal grandeur of the early days of the Church and of the Reformation!

Finally, my brethren, we want the spirit of martyrdom, the spirit of the true Christian confessor. The stake does not burn in our cities, the sword of the law is not drawn against us; and yet, without the sacrifice of the life there is no witness-bearing to the truth, there is no Christianity. Origen, after painting the bloody martyrdom of the confessors of his time, speaks of an obscure martyrdom which has God only for a witness. It is to

this we are called. It is to self-renunciation, to the sacrifice of the will; it is that of which Calvin gives us the example, when he exclaims: "I bring Thee, O God, my heart as a victim;" *Cor meum, velut mactatum, Tibi offero.* The other martyrdom is nothing without this; and the body given to be burnt may be, as St. Paul says, but a vain display of pride. That which is of value is not the outward suffering; it is the feeling of the true martyr, it is the inward crucifixion, it is the cross-bearing. Great sacrifices alone give great victories. The cross is not only the sign, but also the mean, in which we triumph. Lord, in double measure give us the spirit of our fathers!

Yes, Lord, to Thy Churches give that spirit of faith, of Christian knowledge, of liberty, of spirituality, of sanctity, and of sacrifice! Then, when in circumstances, solemn as those under which we meet to-day, it shall be said to us, "Your fathers, where are they?" the blush shall not rush to the brow as we feel how little we are like them. We shall be able to reply, "Our fathers have entered into their glory; they have been carried up in that chariot of fire which catches out of the midst of their sufferings the great witnesses of truth: but they live again in us, we have received their spirit in double measure. We carry on their work; we continue the holy and happy Reformation which, commenced by them, shall only be complete, when we shall have perfectly reproduced in our thoughts, our lives, our Churches, the apostolic pattern. We have stooped, nay, we have fallen upon our knees, that upon us might rest the mantle of Elijah; and now we walk, leaning upon Him who, three centuries ago, began this good work, and who will assuredly finish it for His glory and for the welfare of mankind."

FINIS.

Butler & Tanner, The Selwood Printing Works, Frome, and London